

**Territorial Development Series**



# Roots and Wings of Action Research for Territorial Development

## Connecting local transformation and international collaborative learning

Edited by Miren Larrea



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**Miren Larrea**

2020  
Orkestra - Basque Institute of Competitiveness  
Deusto Foundation

## Territorial Development Series

### Note for the reader

The contributions in this book have been written in English, Spanish and Portuguese and their contents synthesized also in Basque, Norwegian, German and French. By choosing to have an inclusive approach to all these languages we want to generate awareness on the fact that action research is conducted throughout the world in diverse cultural contexts and in multiple languages, although many of these languages disappear when action research enters the academic realm.

To go beyond the symbolism of this decision and make our work understandable for as many readers as possible, we will publish in 2021 a book that will mirror this one by sharing its contributions in English translated into Spanish and its contributions in Spanish translated into English.

### Notas para los lectores

Las contribuciones compartidas en este libro han sido escritas en inglés, español y portugués y sus contenidos resumidos también en euskara, noruego, alemán y francés. Nuestra decisión de tener una aproximación inclusiva al uso de todos estos idiomas responde a nuestro deseo de generar conciencia de que la investigación acción a lo largo del mundo se hace en diversidad de contextos culturales y en múltiples idiomas y que muchos de estos idiomas desaparecen cuando la investigación acción llega al ámbito académico.

Más allá de la dimensión simbólica de esta decisión, queremos compartir nuestro trabajo con el mayor número de lectores posible y en 2021 publicaremos un libro que será un espejo de este y que presentará las contribuciones publicadas en inglés en este libro traducidas al español, y las contribuciones en español traducidas al inglés.

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# Prologue

The long itinerary of action research from its Aristotelian origins through Francis Bacon to the Pragmatists (specifically William James, Charles Pierce, and John Dewey) through the many transformations and diversifications in the twentieth century reveals an endeavor never unified by a hegemonic doctrine. The common thread is emphasizing that to know and understand requires acting on/with the phenomenon/process being studied. This is present in all the approaches and from the Pragmatists forward through figures like Kurt Lewin, Eric Trist, Paolo Freire, Orlando Fals-Borda, William Foote Whyte, Fred Emery, Phillip Herbst, Bjørn Gustavsen, Chris Argyris, Donald Schön, John Elliott, Peter Reason, Robert Flood, and so many others.

Action Research is multiple practices, a plethora of methods, and a common thread of believing that social research in context and in collaboration with the relevant stakeholders is the path to a more liberating, more solidary, and more sustainable society and ecology. Every practitioner has a take, an approach, and strengths and weaknesses but together they form an approach to social research that is rigorous, solidary, and produces meaningful outcomes for both the professional researchers and the collaborators. The essential democracy of action research arises from the belief that everyone's life and experiences produce knowledge and that bringing this knowledge forward and employing it is the high road to better, fairer, and more sustainable designs for human living.

That said, action researchers have never dominated the official academic fields of social research and have suffered greatly from the idea that all forms of social research should be carried out within self-regarding academic disciplinary mini-cartels that are incapable of addressing complex, multidimensional systems problems. This was and remains a recipe for the failure and irrelevance of the social sciences and humanities.

Demanding that the social sciences be "objective" was and remains an exercise in co-optation and domestication of the social sciences. These fields were originally founded to study and improve the human condition rather than merely to document and comment on it at a distance. When the co-optation alone did not work well enough, activist social scientists and activist practices were purged from the social sciences or demoted to low prestige and expert-driven "applied" social science activities off the academic prestige track (Greenwood, 2008). All of this has been massively reinforced by the "audit culture" (Strathern, ed., 2000) whose neoliberal practices of evaluation has strengthened the divisions among the social sciences and humanities and punished any work that is applied and results in meaningful social change rather than in 5 publications in an A-level journal read by other authors who want to

publish in A-level journals. What action researchers do have in common is a rejection of disciplinary silos and the idea that you can understand anything without being engaged in collaborative practice with the local stakeholders.

### **Persistent fragmentation in the practice of action research**

Action researchers are a fractious bunch with differing approaches, differing ideological commitments and divergent views of liberation, different standards on how protagonistic the action researcher herself must be in practice. We work in radically different contexts as well, depressed rural areas and urban ghettos of the Global South and the Global North, in large capitalist companies, in community and regional development organizations, in environmentally activist organizations, in refugee relief programs, in educational institutions, in unions, in public sector organizations, in hospitals and many more. While this diversity of settings and issues is a problem if the aim were to build an empire of action research, it makes sense that different problems, different contexts, and differing kinds of people would produce a diversity of practices and outcomes.

Here I will list just a few of these threads by way of illustration.

- Kurt Lewin's field theory and action research in European and American domestic contexts.
- The rich currents in Socio-technical Systems Design including the work of Einar Thorsrud, Fred Emery, Eric Trist, Bjørn Gustavsen, Morten Levin, Ulbo de Sitter, Friso Den Hertog and others.
- Participatory Research in Asia and Africa with Budd Hall, Rajesh Tandon, L. David Brown and others.
- Latin American liberationist action research with Paolo Freire, Orlando Fals-Borda, María Eugenia Sánchez Rivera, Eduardo Almeida Acosta, Libertad Hernández, and others.
- Feminist action research with Patricia Maguire, Mary Brydon-Miller, Alice MacIntyre and a host of others.
- Insider Action Research with David Coughlan, William Torbert and others.
- Action research in international development in the practices of Robert Chambers, Norman Uphoff, and their colleagues.
- Action research in policy studies with Hendrik Wagenaar, Koen Bartels, Julia Wittmayer.
- Action research in organizational development and reflective practice in the mode of Chris Argyris and Donald Schön.
- Action research in community and regional studies, including community-based resource management as in the work of Miren Larrea, James Karlsen, Karim-Aly Kasam, and others.
- Action research in education in a diverse and divergent set of approaches including the work of John Elliott, Ernie Stringer, Davydd Greenwood, Morten Levin, Mary Brydon-Miller, Susan Noffke, and many others.
- Action research in the American "South" in the work of Myles Horton, Mary Belenky, Helen Lewis, and John Gaventa.

There are a host of other varieties and hundreds of practitioners not mentioned here and I leave them out because this is a prologue, not a bibliographic essay. A good cross-section of these practices can be found in Bradbury, ed. (2015). I want to make it plain that action research is not a "thing", a "theory", a "method", or a cult. It is a host of approaches and contexts that all share certain basic epistemic and ethical principles, namely that research

and action are mutually necessary and fairer and more sustainable social arrangements are always the goal.

This is why Morten Levin and I decided to write our *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change* (1998, 2007) using a group of chapters to emphasize and celebrate the variety of approaches to action research. We also went farther and argued that these different approaches needed to find ways to make a common cause and enhance each other's practices. Each approach has much to learn from the others and solidarity is the only survival strategy in the face of the largely-successful neoliberal attempts to purge democratically-oriented social and humanistic work from the social sciences and humanities.

## Significant problems

Los hermanos sean unidos  
porque esa es la ley primera.

Tengan unión verdadera  
en cualquier tiempo que sea,  
porque si entre ellos pelean  
los devoran los de afuera.

José Hernández

*El Gaucho Martín Fierro* (1872/1983)

The mutual ignorance and even occasional dismissal by different groups of action researchers is not a new problem. The organization ALARA (Action Learning and Action Research) has tried to mediate this with large international meetings. Orlando Fals-Borda attempted these reconciliations in his "Convergence" conferences, the last in 1997. The difficulties do not always stem from mutual hostility. Morten Levin and I attended and brought a group of action research PhD students from the Norwegian Industrial Democracy movement and a number of Action Research PhDs from Cornell University. They presented their work to a diverse audience from all over the world at Fals-Borda's last Convergence conference.

The Norwegian presentation was well attended and at the end of the formal presentations, an eminent Mexican action researcher stood up and stated, without a hint of hostility, that he had listened and appreciated the presentations but that given his experiences and context, he characterized the Norwegian tradition as "extraterrestrial" to him. I was struck by the honesty and the truth of that observation about the depth and breadth of the differences in our approaches and contexts. This remains a central challenge in action research to this day, one the present book begins to mediate.

One of the reasons I was glad to be asked to evaluate this manuscript and take an active role with the authors is precisely because it is one of the few principled attempts so far to mediate some of these differences. The participants deserve a great deal of credit for doing this. I believe that in an endangered and radically unjust world system, efforts such as these are the only way forward.

Taking this path has risks. From within the ranks of action research, there will be critics who claim that linking the Global North and the Global South is just another example of colonialism. Within the Global North, hegemonic objectivist social science will continue to "domesticate" and "deactivate" any social research that threatens the *status quo* and will jigger the evaluation systems to punish this kind of work as not "objective", "unscientific", as mere "sto-

rytelling". Neoliberalism has many academic lackeys and we action researchers do not need to help them by fighting among ourselves. The participants in this book have demonstrated that another, better path is possible. The mutual stimulation the participants have gotten shows that they all have experiences and approaches to offer that can improve each other's practices.

### **A generational transfer**

There is another reason why this volume is so gratifying to me and Morten Levin. It marks the appearance of a new, diverse generation of Action Research practitioners developing a newly-defined common practice of Action Research for Territorial Development. This is particularly gratifying us because, in addition to conveying the work and dynamism of a new and hopeful generation, it involves both of us in personal ways. Morten created 4 PhD programs in Action Research at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), programs in which I also taught. Two of the co-authors in the present book come from these programs (one a faculty member and one a former PhD student) and are key players in this effort. Growing out of his PhD with one of the NTNU programs, James Karlsen (together with Hans Christian Garmann Johnsen) brought Action Research to Orkestra and have taken experiences from the Basque Country back to Norway as well. This was the kind of future Morten Levin, I, and the other participants in these PhD programs had hoped for.

For me personally, this book has an even more layered meaning. I began my career as an anthropological PhD researcher in Euskadi (Spanish Basque Country). I conducted an 18-month study of the rural and tourist economy and cultures of Hondarribia. Subsequently in the 1980s, I began my personal itinerary as an action researcher in the cooperatives of Mondragón. That work eventually resulted in my being invited to teach in Norway and resulted in decades of collaborative teaching and writing with Morten Levin.

The more work I did in action research, the more frustrated I became with both what passes for the social sciences in contemporary universities and the pathologically fordist organization of university life that automatically separates the university from the ability to teach about, research, and act on complex real world problems. This led me and Morten Levin into a series of analyses and publications on these problems including a recent book, *Recreating the Public University and Reviving Democracy: An Action Research Approach* (Levin and Greenwood, 2016). This work eventually took me back to the Basque Country to learn about the Mondragón University, another of the Mondragón cooperative groups.

A few years later, that visit resulted in the organization of an international "search conference" hosted by the Mondragón Cooperatives and attended by Norwegian, Colombian, Portuguese, North American, and Mondragón participants. The goal was to develop a collaborative multinational agenda for defending social democratic and cooperative practices in the face of the economic, political, demographic, and environmental challenges of the future. Key to this effort now is a collaborative dialogue being development between Norwegian industrial democracy researchers and the research, development, and educational arms of the Mondragón cooperatives. The way this dialogue between Euskadi, Norway, educational reform, and action research has developed has exceeded any realistic hopes we could have had when we all started on this trajectory.

### **Action research practice in manuscript evaluation and academic life**

One of the insanities of contemporary academic life is idea that evaluation of social science and humanistic work can and should be "objective". By and large, in my experi-



ence, “objectivity” has been used to justify the opinions of powerful academic actors who control the levers of institutional power. Objectivity in the social sciences is a chimera that permits the evaluators to, as the Spanish saying goes “Tirar la piedra y esconder la mano” (“Throw the stone and then hide your hand”). And numerical rankings permit fools with a calculator to imagine themselves to be academic evaluators. Rather than a collegial or mentoring process, manuscript review often becomes either an exercise in enforcing orthodoxy or in promoting the work of friends and colleagues, all under the mask of “objective evaluation”.

Various efforts to overcome this have been made, as in the manuscript management and mentoring system developed by the journal, *Action Research* but such efforts are rare and do not pass the muster in the academic “audit culture” (Strathern, 2000). When I was asked to serve as the manuscript evaluator for the publisher of this book, I explored the possibility of reviewing the manuscript openly and asked to enter into a transparent dialogue with the editor and the authors about weaknesses and improvements. The press and the editor supported this proposal. The authors all saw my review comments, suggestions for improvement, and were encouraged to respond to me and to the editor together. The smart, good faith responses from everyone were impressive. In addition, many issues arose that reached beyond the current book. As a result of these discussions, future agendas for collaborative work have developed as well. This experience shows that collaboration and knowledge sharing can produce liberating outcomes, a core premise of Action Research.

I have often felt despair about the future of AR in the face of neoliberalism and now in a world faced with massive inequality, pandemics, and environmental collapse. Through this volume we see there is reason for hope because a new and dynamic generation has taken up the cause and made it their own. I particularly thank Miren Larrea and Patricia Canto for their support in this novel and inspiring process. Morten and I wish the collaborators all the best.

Davydd J. Greenwood  
Goldwin Smith Professor of Anthropology Emeritus  
Académico correspondiente,  
Real Academia de la Ciencias Morales y Políticas

June 22, 2020

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# An invitation at the intersection of AR+ and ARTD

*Hilary Bradbury*

## **In Support of a Global Ecology of Learning**

We are invited to make Action Research for Territorial Development our own; to learn about and integrate what's useful for our own benefit. Emerging from the Covid19 pandemic we are better at imagining a more equitable and sustainable society while also feeling the urgency to realize this. The most recent IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) Special Report on Global Warming gives us 12 years before catastrophic environmental breakdown becomes civilizational breakdown. What then might we accomplish together? Where does Action Research for Territorial Development ARTD fit in?

Action Research for Territorial Development operates by convening regional politicians and relevant stakeholders to work together for improvement to their region. It is a form of action research that emphasizes working with politicians. It makes policy work part of, not a hoped for byproduct of, change efforts. ARTD, as all action research, seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern (Reason and Bradbury, 2000; Bradbury 2015). ARTD has developed in the Basque region of Spain leveraging the theory and practice of Scandinavian industrial democracy, originally developed for workplaces and led by constructivist pragmatist Bjorn Gustavsen (2014).

In effect Action Research for Territorial Development calls us to explore the conditions for reinventing not only organizational life, but political systems and institutions that function as a lever for whole regions. A key to the shifting in events and types of stakeholders as the work transforms from North to South Europe lies in amplifying the principle of relationality, of paying attention to how self and other can better connect and thrive together. ARTD is not politics done behind closed doors, but brings a community orientation now with political traction.

From the opening note in this volume about conscious multilingualism through to the epilogue, we sense the sincere commitment to inclusivity. Action Research for Territorial Development therefore offers an update to the increasingly vibrant global family of action research.

The roots and wings of ARTD, from the world of air, the other of earth, must be connected through warm hearts, heads and hands. This is the point of contact also with AR+ Foundation.

## ARTD and AR+

AR+ Foundation supports a global community, online and face to face, so that action-oriented scholar practitioners may connect with community in response to the call of our times. AR+ fosters a contemporary update to action research called Action-oriented Research for Transformation, ART in which we call ARTists to re-weave activist, artistic and scientific dimensions of knowledge creation. The value of participating in this loosely knit global community is that we can learn, cross-pollinate and amplify innovative efforts.

Stewarded by universities and agents of transformation around the world, AR+ practices with a consciously relational orientation. In this the “how” becomes as important as the “what.” The work we do is marked by its embrace of values based intention, respect for generative silence (mindfulness), speaking from the heart, use of the arts, listening generously, participating constructively, hanging in when confidence is shaken, and... yes, enjoying ourselves! We put our ART in service of ever expanding circles of developmental self-correcting within education-, politics-, business-, *relationships*. We’re creating knowledge that is capable of revising beliefs in the face of new evidence. Our aspiration is that more of us who practice action oriented scholarship may revitalize our social institutions as social systems learn to become *beneficial* presences on our shared Earth.

I met Dr. Miren Larrea initially through her scholarly papers for the journal *Action Research* that describe work she leads at Orkestra (Larrea, 2019). I was intrigued by Miren’s sense of the potentially transformative value of conflict in politics, which is more often seen as an antithesis rather than a catalyst of innovation. At a time in which politics is increasingly polarized and polarizing, and regarded by the average citizen as the preserve of old cronies, I saw a mix of pragmatic optimism and realistic appraisal of what is needed if the practice of politics is to be experienced as productive.

I invited Miren to bring a couple of colleagues to the first international gathering of AR+ hosted by Chalmers U. Sweden on Women’s Day 2019. In that mix of sixty global leaders from 22 countries and in which English and Spanish danced together, Miren introduced this very book. In ARTD’s signature spirit of inclusivity all who wished to be involved were invited to step in. We also co-hosted an AR+ coLAB (a community of dialogue for practice on line) at AR+. Many participants have since become authors and responders in the following pages. We see the characteristics of AR+ emphasis on artistry, developmental reflexivity and transformation, e.g., in the work of Jean Hartmann, we see the artistry of imagery developed in an AR+ co-laboratory which serves as a point of intersection.

## Personal intersects with political

At the intersection of AR+ and ARTD is the space where personal is political, and political is personal, which, as feminists have been telling us for quite some time, requires our effort to transcend inherited dichotomies. This means we get to integrate what has been treated as separate for too long: personal reflexivity *with* systems thinking, psychology *with* sociology, so-called feminine with masculine concerns inside a dialogue-as-equals orientation that produces results by building capacity for learning together.

The transcending of dichotomies appears also in the innovations of ARTD. For this we may owe acknowledgement to early women pragmatists and action researchers rarely acknowledged. Jane Addams (1902) and Mary Parker Follett (1924), and early action researcher Marja Liisa Swantz who initiated and coined the term participative action research, (Nyemba & Mayer, 2018), each provided signposts toward a relational praxis of mutual empowerment. Their names have often since disappeared from the patriarchal account of ac-

tion research.. Each emphasized a new type of relational power —“power within”— that comes as citizen-stakeholders name and reframe their own experiences of dis-ease and experiment in transforming their lives.

As ecological crisis grows, another dichotomy to transcend is global and local. As bioregionalism increases, in which human activity is becoming increasingly dependent on distinct ecological and geographical regions while operating within a global system, ARTD offers a compelling practice for regional *and* inter-regional/global activity, that inspires the repertoire of action research approaches.

I am very interested in what it would look like to grow capacity among politicians the world over to engage more fruitfully with an increasingly well informed but despairing citizenry at a time when social-ecological problems are global in nature, but must be dealt with regionally. At AR+ we hope our cross pollination will continue to touch real citizens in transforming the practice of politics.

As one who loves symbols, I draft this note of appreciation on Women’s Day weekend, the very weekend in which our communities met one year ago. This book is one fruit from an early harvest. I hope for ongoing fruitful relationship between our communities.

Hilary Bradbury, Ph.D., Curator, AR+ Foundation | Action Research Plus.  
*Action Research journal, Founding Editor in Chief.*  
 Portland, OR.

Women’s Day, 2020.

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## Introduction

# People, trajectories, ideas, actions and emotions at the core of action research environments

Miren Larrea<sup>1</sup>

### **Laburpena**

*Pertsonak, ibilbideak, ideiak, ekintzak ta emozioak ikerketa-ekintzarako guneen muinean*

Liburu honek bi helburu ditu. Alde batetik, *lurralde garapenerako ikerketa-ekintza* gaur egun zer den partekatu nahi dugu irakurleekin. Beste alde batetik, liburu honek 2008az geroztik lurralde garapenerako ikerketa-ekintza gune askotako eremu jakin batean bultzatzeko eraikitzen ari garen komunitatea sendotzen laguntzea ere nahi dugu. Hain zuzen ere, komunitate hori osatzen dugu Orkestra-Lehiakortasunerako Euskal Institutuak (Euskal Autonomia Erkidegoa), Agderreko Unibertsitateak (Norvegia), Praxisek (Rafaela, Argentina) eta Tierra del Fuego Unibertsitateak (Argentina).

Liburuaren bizkarrezurra hamar kapituluk osatzen dute, lurralde garapenerako ikerketa-ekintzari lotutako komunitate horretako kideek idatziak. Kapitulu bakoitzean, gaur egun lantzen ari garen eztabaidak partekatu nahi izan ditugu. Ekarpenera horiek lurralde garapenerako ikerketa-ekintzaren oinarriak dira eta kapituluaren arteko elkarrizketaz baliatuz ulertu behar dira, kontakizunak eta egileak, prozesu beraren parte direnez, gurutzatzen joaten baitira. Gure lurraldeen garapenera laguntzeko apustuak eta horretarako lurralde garapenerako ikerketa-ekintzaren metodologia erabiltzeak definitzen dute gure komunitatea eta lotzen gaituzte prozesu berean.

Liburuak, ordea, ez du soilik lurralde garapenerako ikerketa-ekintzaren oinarriez hitz egiten. Hegoak eduki beharra ere azpimarratzen du, beste toki batzuetara hegan egiteko eta beste pertsona eta pentsamolde batzuen eragina jasotzeko. Liburuan, hego horiek ko-ikertzaileen ekarpenen bidez eraiki ditugu; beren ikuspegia eskaini digute, *kapituluaren* egileekin batera lan eginez, *kapitulu laburrak* deitu ditugunetan. Testu horiek hirugarren ekarpen mota batekin osatu ditugu: *esperientzia postak*. Testu labur hauetan, kapituluak irakurri dituzten pertsonak, sarritan oso urruneko inguruneetakoak, irakurketa horiek eragin zizkieten gogoetak partekatzen dituzte, beren bizipenei erreferentzia eginez.

Liburu honen beste ezaugarrietako bat hizkuntza aniztasuna da. Egile bakoitzak nahi duen hizkuntza erabili du idazteko eta laburpenak beste bi hizkuntzetan prestatu ditu.

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Horrela, ingelesaren ondoan —hizkuntza nagusia esparru akademikoetan— gaztelania, frantsesa, portugesa eta alemana aurkituko ditugu, baita hiztun gutxiagoko hizkuntzak ere, norvegiera eta euskara kasu. Hizkuntzen bizikidetzatza horrek lurralde garapenerako prozesuen konplexutasuna ulertzeko ekarpen bat izan nahi du.

Liburuaren edukiak hiru ataletan banatu dira. Lehenengo atalak hiru kapitulu ditu: bakoitzak gai desberdina lantzen badu ere, lurralde garapenerako ikerketa-ekintzaren ikuspegi kronologikoa ematen digute. Atal honek lagunduko digu lurralde garapenerako ikerketa-ekintzaren bilakaera ulertzen, 2008tik gaur egunera arte. Bigarren atalak lurralde garapenerako ikerketa-ekintza irakaskuntzan nola erabiltzen den azaltzen digu. Hirugarren atalak askotariko gaiak biltzen ditu, lurralde garapenerako ikerketa-ekintzaren esparruan gaur egungo ikerrildo nagusiak zein diren erakusteko.

## Resumen

### *Personas, trayectorias, ideas, acciones y emociones en núcleo de los entornos para la investigación acción*

Este libro tiene un doble objetivo. En primer lugar, queremos compartir con las personas que lo lean qué es hoy en día la *investigación acción para el desarrollo territorial* (IADT). Además, queremos que este libro contribuya a consolidar la comunidad que desde 2008 estamos desarrollando para impulsar la IADT en el espacio multi local conformado por Orkestra- Instituto Vasco de Competitividad (País Vasco, España), la Universidad de Agder (Noruega), Praxis (Rafaela, Argentina) y la Universidad de Tierra del Fuego (Argentina).

La columna vertebral del libro son diez capítulos escritos por miembros de esta comunidad vinculada a la IADT. En cada uno de ellos compartimos los debates que estamos abordando en la actualidad. Estas contribuciones constituyen las raíces de la IADT y sólo pueden entenderse a través del diálogo entre capítulos, cuyas historias y autores se entrelazan al ser parte de un mismo proceso. Lo que nos define como comunidad y nos vincula en el mismo proceso son nuestra apuesta por contribuir al desarrollo de nuestros territorios y la decisión de utilizar la IADT como metodología para hacerlo.

El libro, sin embargo, no habla exclusivamente de las raíces de la IADT. Plantea también la necesidad de tener alas que nos permitan volar a otros lugares y abrirnos a la influencia de otras gentes y otros modos de pensar. Estas alas se han construido en el libro a través de las contribuciones de una serie de co-investigadores que han colaborado con los autores de *capítulos* y comparten su perspectiva en lo que denominamos *capítulos cortos*. Estos textos se complementan con un tercer tipo de aportación, los *posts experienciales*. Se trata de textos cortos en que personas que han leído los capítulos comparten las reflexiones que les inspiraron en relación con sus propias vivencias en contextos frecuentemente lejanos.

Otra de las características de este libro es la experimentación con el pluralismo lingüístico. Los autores de las distintas contribuciones han elegido el idioma en el que querían escribir y han preparado resúmenes en dos idiomas adicionales. Todo ello hace que el inglés —idioma mayoritario en los ámbitos académicos— conviva no sólo con el español, francés, portugués y alemán, sino con idiomas con públicos objetivos más reducidos como el noruego y el euskara. Esta convivencia es una aportación a la comprensión de la complejidad en los procesos de desarrollo territorial.

Los contenidos del libro se han distribuido en tres secciones. En la primera se presentan tres capítulos que, aun abordando temáticas diversas, comparten una visión cronológica de la IADT. Se trata de una sección que ayuda a entender la evolución de la IADT entre 2008 y la actualidad. La segunda sección recopila capítulos que se enfocan en la utilización de la IADT en el ámbito de la docencia. La tercera plantea un abanico de temas que muestran cuáles son las líneas actuales de investigación en el ámbito de la IADT.



# People, trajectories, ideas, actions and emotions at the core of action research environments

## Introduction

It was back in 2008 when I first heard about action research (AR). A decade later, here I am writing the introduction to a book whose aim is to consolidate an AR environment in Orkestra, Basque Institute of Competitiveness (University of Deusto) and its network with Agder University (Norway), Praxis (Rafaela, Argentina), and the National University of Tierra del Fuego (Argentina). One of the objectives of the book is to share the approach to AR that we have constructed over this decade, which we have called *action research for territorial development* (ARTD). But more than that, this book aims to create the conditions for ARTD to continue evolving, by structuring our thoughts about what AR environments are and how they evolve and develop. As I write the last version of this introduction, during the first months of the COVID-19 crisis, this aim seems to me to be more relevant than ever.

The idea for the book came up in a conversation with a colleague, Ainhoa Arrona, who was writing about ARTD and who talked about it as if it were something that belonged to James Karlsen and me, because we coined the term when we were writing a book. I realised that writing, at least in the academic world, means publicly making something one's own. Ainhoa was constructing ARTD but had not made this explicit in any publication. I thought that if we were able to write a book where each of us working with ARTD wrote our own chapter about the part that every one of us was constructing, then ARTD would be much more collectively owned and shared than it was. This, I felt, was an important factor for our environment to be able to evolve and develop. This book is, for all participants in our environment, a process to collectively make ARTD our own while we share it with the readers.

In the very early stages of these reflections, Hilary Bradbury got in touch with me as Editor-in-Chief of the Action Research Journal and our dialogue process led to Orkestra joining AR + (<https://actionresearchplus.com/>), a worldwide community of action — oriented scholar— practitioners. We reflected on what we could contribute within the network and decided to open up the book writing process to other members of this community so that we could see it as an experimental process to connect a small AR community like ours with a wider community involved in AR. Hilary's enthusiasm set this opening process in motion.

While struggling to find a title for our book I came across a quote about roots and wings. It said, "the best we can give our children are roots to grow and wings to fly". I felt this described the two main efforts in the writing of this book. The public appropriation of our own work will give our ARTD environment the roots we need to grow, and by opening our environment, we explore our capacity (wings) to reach beyond our limits.

Following the roots and wings metaphor, this book has ten *chapters* that contribute to the roots of ARTD, where we, ten authors who are part of the ARTD community, share our latest contributions. Each of us worked on the writing process with a co-inquirer. Most of the co-inquirers entered the process through the meeting co-organised by AR+ at Chalmers University (Sweden) in March 2019. They contribute with ten *short chapters*, inspired by the co-inquiry processes. We also invited thirteen more authors to read the chapters and contribute with an *experiential post* about how the chapter resonates in their own contexts. Together with the co-inquirers, they give wings to ARTD.

## Constructing an action research environment

ARTD emerged in Orkestra-Basque Institute of Competitiveness (Basque Country, Spain), a research institute created in 2007 in the University of Deusto with the aim of transforming competitiveness in the region. It was this aim for transformation that inspired our search for new methodologies for the institute and led us to action research. We then faced a new challenge, developing action research that responded to the specificities of territorial development processes. To do so, Orkestra formalised collaboration agreements that have created the organisational context for our ARTD community to work together. The first of these agreements was signed with Agderforskning in Norway, and the other two in Argentina, with the National Technological University of Argentina in Rafaela and the National University of Tierra del Fuego.

The main idea we nurture in these pages is that ARTD is not the result of summing up contents developed by individual researchers and educators, but the result of the development of what we have called *an AR environment*.

By an AR environment, we mean a community of people who connect through theoretical and conceptual discussions and work together developing projects. But, above all, it is a community of people who have affective connections and a *shared project* with the aim of constructing something together. We have often tried to find a name for this *shared project* and the closest we get is to consider it as a *shared engagement* to transform the territories where we live. The ARTD community, thus defined, is a multilocal community of researchers living and working in four main locations (the Basque Country, Spain; Agder, Norway; Rafaela, Santa Fé, Argentina and Tierra del Fuego, Argentina). ARTD bonds this community together. But what is ARTD?

ARTD is not, from a theoretical point of view, a new approach to AR. It is the result of developing the pragmatist approach as proposed by Greenwood and Levin (2007), experimenting with democratic dialogue (Gustavsen, 1992) and reinterpreting the work of Paulo Freire in AR processes with stakeholders in the Basque Country, Agder, Rafaela, and Tierra del Fuego. It thus bridges Southern PAR and the pragmatist, industrial democracy approach. In this practice, we have combined AR with theoretical frameworks coming from regional development (Europe), local economic development (Latin America), policy sciences and communication of social science. ARTD, thus, is not a new approach to AR but rather is the result of praxis that integrates the mentioned theoretical influences and specific practices in the four locations. Consequently, in addition to researchers, our research environment includes stakeholders (mainly policymakers), who are also part of the theoretical and practical discussions, as well as the emotional connections and the engagement to transform our territories.

The construction of ARTD among the four environments has taken place in the context of collaboration. However, this is complemented by a friendly mutual resistance to being colonised by the ideas of others that coexists with a genuine desire to learn together and be influenced by others. The contribution from the Rafaela environment has explicitly been framed as part of the epistemology of the South, while some of us in the European universities have grown aware of our taken-for-granted northern perspectives. This is partly visible in the choice of languages in which the chapters have been written. The two Latin American authors in our team have chosen to publish in Spanish, while researchers in the Basque Country and Norway have chosen English, despite the fact that none of us are native English speakers. With these dilemmas and others, the willingness to learn together to transform our respective territories defines us as one and the same AR environment, connected by ARTD.

## What is Action Research for Territorial Development?

As I have said, ARTD is what holds our environment together, and for the reader who is unfamiliar with ARTD, I provide a brief introduction. There are two elements I use as threads: our AR processes and our publications.

We started developing ARTD processes with stakeholders in the Orkestra environment in the Basque region in Spain around 2007. This is a region with a high level of autonomy in the Spanish context and a high competence level for regional and sub-regional territorial development. We started mainly carrying out small projects and workshops with county development agencies. Our first big project was *Gipuzkoa Sarean* (Gipuzkoa Networked in the Basque language). This project began in 2009, and the main stakeholder was the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa (Gipuzkoa, with 710,000 inhabitants, is one of the three provinces of the Basque region). The process is still ongoing but with a new name: Territorial Development Laboratory of *Etorkizuna Eraikiz* (which in the Basque language means *Constructing the Future*). The second big project was the Bilbao Next Lab, developed with the development agency and the City Council of Bilbao, which started in 2013 and is also still ongoing. In addition, ARTD has influenced *Bizkaia Orekan* (Balanced Bizkaia), a project carried out with the Provincial Council of Bizkaia (the largest of the three provinces with 1,100,000 inhabitants) since 2015. All the above-mentioned are territorial development projects conducted in collaboration with policymakers.

In the other three environments, Agder, Rafaela and Tierra del Fuego, ARTD has mainly (although not exclusively) been developed in the educational context, mostly related to Master's degrees. We have experimented with ARTD in the Master's programme in *Innovation and Knowledge Development* at the School of Business and Law of the University of Agder (a region in southern Norway with around 300,000 inhabitants where the university aims to play a relevant role in territorial development); the Master's programme in *Territorial Development* at the National Technological University of Argentina in Rafaela (a city of around 90,000 inhabitants known for experimenting with the relationship between education and politics), and in the *Institute for Economic Development and Innovation* at the National University of Tierra del Fuego (a province in the south of Argentina with around 120,000 inhabitants where territorial development is characterised by its insular and highly peripheral nature, and the university aims to help other territorial actors own their development process).

The second element that can help the reader understand ARTD is our academic outputs. We coined the term ARTD in Karlsen and Larrea (2014a). Before that (or at the same time), there were some publications that shaped what ARTD is today, but without using that term (Estensoro, 2012; Estensoro, 2015; Karlsen and Larrea, 2012, Karlsen *et al.*, 2012; Karlsen and Larrea, 2014b). When proposing the term, we argued for ARTD as an approach in the field of regional innovation policy that could change the role of social researchers from observers to participants in territorial development. We discussed complexity and defined it in a way that put conflict at the centre of the AR process. We shared our own co-generative framework, which was the result of applying Greenwood and Levin's (2007) framework in our projects. We also experimented with the concept of dialogue by Gustavsen (1992) and argued for the political nature of our research inspired by Freire (1996).

We took another relevant step when we explored how ARTD is connected with the pedagogical approach for territorial development (Costamagna and Pérez, 2013). We defined action researchers as facilitative territorial actors (Costamagna and Larrea, 2015, 2018). We explicitly integrated social construction as part of our approach to face the complexity of territorial development, and we operationalised the roles and capabilities required to facilitate territorial development processes.

Over the last few years, ARTD has explored the following aspects, among others: the link between educational and political processes in territorial development (Costamagna, 2014); ARTD's application in innovation policies (Arrona, 2017; Estensoro and Larrea, 2016; Karlsen and Larrea, 2018; Larrea, Estensoro and Sisti, 2018; Larrea, Estensoro and Pertoldi, 2019;); the relevance of social construction (Karlsen and Larrea, 2017); first-person AR in the context of Phd processes (Romano, 2017, 2019); the intersection of ARTD and policy sciences (Arrona, 2019; Arrona and Larrea, 2018; Larrea and Arrona, 2019); collaborative governance (Arrona, Estensoro, Larrea and Sisti, 2018; Larrea, 2019c); the responsible communication of AR (Canto, 2019; Canto *et al.*, 2018), ARTD's systemic and political dimensions (Larrea, 2019a, 2019b), and its potential to transform universities (Karlsen and Larrea, 2019; Larrea, 2019d). This book is a new step in the multiple paths ARTD is exploring. By sharing insights from practice in the four locations previously presented, we complement the existing literature on these different dimensions of action research.

### **Roots and wings of ARTD: a timeline of people, ideas, and actions**

In this section, I introduce the different chapters, short response chapters and experiential posts included in the book. But more than their content, I introduce the authors and their stories. It is my way of leading the reader into thinking about our environment and how this book provides roots and wings for it. The section could have been written from as many perspectives as authors in this book. However, it is based on my experience of the process and the dialogue I held with the rest of the authors. It is described as a timeline because it follows a certain chronological order that shows how each of the authors of the chapters entered ARTD.

#### **a) *The initiations***

Orkestra was officially created in 2007, but ARTD was already on its way before that in the professional experiences of some of the authors of this book. I worked in a county development agency from 2002 to 2007, where I felt that sometimes research could be helpful to deal with the challenges we had to face. I used to discuss this with Mari Jose Aranguren at the University of Deusto. We shared several small projects, where together with county actors, we co-generated solutions to problems. When Orkestra was created, Mari Jose Aranguren was hired as the coordinator of one of the research areas and shortly after she invited me to join, with the goal of further developing the type of research we were doing. That was in 2007. In 2008, we heard about AR for the first time.

Mari Jose Aranguren has played a very significant role in the development of ARTD. In 2008 she was a researcher with managerial responsibilities in Orkestra, who held a very strong point of view on Orkestra's mission. In her words "Orkestra was not created to understand competitiveness, but to change it". Following this principle, she was critical of regarding the institute's activity exclusively in terms of reports and was ready to explore other approaches that would generate what she called transformative research. Her career in the institute has focused on management and, as this book is being written, she is the General Manager of Orkestra.

In Chapter 1, Mari Jose shares a reflection on how the management of research organisations affects the development of AR environments. The co-inquirer that reflected together with her is Danilo Streck. Danilo has helped us develop the wings of ARTD since 2014 when we collaborated on a special issue for the International Journal of Action Research. Roberto Horta, a managing researcher like Mari Jose, has contributed with an experiential post that takes ARTD to Uruguay.

My own role as a facilitator of AR processes in Orkestra started at this stage. Maybe because of the role I had played in the county development agency, I had a taken-for-granted assumption that I was expected to focus on stakeholders and their transformation process.

In Chapter 9, I problematise this assumption to propose that overcoming it can improve our second person practice by not focusing exclusively on stakeholders' transformation processes but also on those of researchers. I use the gender perspective to experiment with this idea. My co-inquirer in this process was Hilary Bradbury, whom I got to know through a publication in the Action Research Journal and has since been an ally in the construction of wings for ARTD. Malida Mookken, Jean Hartmann, and Isabel Heck through their experiences, provide a polyhedral perspective of gender and self-development.

We continue with the timeline of ARTD. County development agencies became the stakeholders of our AR projects in Orkestra. We started to collaborate with Garapen, an association of local development agencies, in order to invite all agencies that were interested to join these processes. On average, we worked with 13 agencies out of the 31. We focused on participatory competitiveness diagnoses and cluster mappings. In parallel, we explored AR in participatory evaluation processes with cluster associations. When in seminars and conferences about innovation and competitiveness, we started to ask about AR, most researchers were unfamiliar with it. But then, in a conference of the *European Network on Industrial Policy* (EUNIP) in 2008, Bjørn Asheim, one of the main academics in our field, recommended that we meet James Karlsen and Arne Isaksen. This is how, at the core of regional innovation policy scholarship, we found our connection to the AR community.

## b) *The Norwegian influence and connections to local economic development*

Mari Jose and I met James Karlsen in Santander (Spain). He had taken his PhD on the role of universities in a doctoral programme led by Morten Levin and Davydd Greenwood. We immediately realised that his education as an action researcher would be useful in Orkestra.

Our first move was to tell him we wanted to travel to Norway to see how they were doing AR. He advised us first to read Greenwood and Levin (2007) and reflect on our institute. I read the book and wrote the first reflection document on how Orkestra could be an AR environment. Davydd Greenwood and Morten Levin thus became, through their book, part of the roots of ARTD. Through their interpretation of AR, we realised that proposing AR meant questioning some of the ways we had been doing research. Our thoughts could be interpreted as a critique of the institute, and we only dared share the document with one other researcher. Then we flew to Agder, Norway, with two policymakers from the Basque government, with whom we were planning to develop AR in the future.

There was also a third member of Orkestra who went with us to Agder, Amaia Azpiazu. Although she is not an author in this book, she played a major role in the development of AR during those early years by facilitating the interaction between researchers and stakeholders.

After our visit to Agder, James Karlsen joined Orkestra part-time to help us develop AR. He worked with the Orkestra team in training processes and connected our environment to experienced action researchers. Industrial democracy became central to our development. But we—including James—, came from the field of regional innovation policy and wanted to have our impact there. Consequently, we started to rethink industrial democracy, developed mainly in workplaces, in a regional context. As a result, James and I published a book coining the term *action research for territorial development* (ARTD) in 2014.

After continued collaboration in the Basque Country for almost a decade, in 2017, James decided to experiment with taking ARTD to the Agder environment. As he said, he was taking AR back to Norway, after a period of transformation in the Basque Country. This experience is happening in the context of a course named *Innovation in the Public Sector*, where Master's students are action researchers in territorial development processes.

The previous experience is what James writes about in Chapter 5. James has collaborated in the writing process with Benito Teehankee, who joined the book writing process after hearing about it in the Chalmers meeting. He has integrated AR at De La Salle University in Manila and could understand James's experience. Rómulo Pinheiro, a colleague of James at Agder University, uses the chapter as an inspiration to write about his own endeavours to integrate co-creation in a Master's programme.

We continue introducing authors in the timeline. In one of the workshops with county development agencies in this early period, I met Miren Estensoro. She worked at a local development agency, and her initial experience with ARTD was as a stakeholder. One day she approached me, saying that she was also a PhD student at the University of the Basque Country and that she was determined to include AR in her PhD. After that, I was invited to be one of her supervisors, and she joined us in Orkestra part-time, while she continued working at the agency too. When she finished her PhD, she joined our institute full-time and started working with the biggest development agency in the Basque Country, Bilbao Ekintza, doing AR in the City of Bilbao. There are two features that have characterised her trajectory in ARTD. She has the unusual capability to be able to integrate herself into the processes of policymakers, sometimes with such intensity that she has faced the challenge of going native and the need to maintain a critical distance. The other feature is that she has practised ARTD in a city, while most ARTD up until then had been conducted at the county or regional level.

Miren combines these features in Chapter 8, where she addresses AR for city development as part of ARTD. The co-inquirer for Miren was Isabel Heck, who has also experienced AR in cities. Isabel got in touch with us as the result of the experiment we did through videos in the AR+ blog (<https://actionresearchplus.com/action-research-for-territorial-development-a-collective-experiment/>). There are two authors that have provided experiential posts on this chapter: Mikaela Vasstrom writes based on her experience in northern Europe, while Eduardo Sisti, located in Orkestra, reflects on his recent experience with AR after years of doing research with other approaches.

### c) *The Latin American contribution*

The timeline now moves into a different continent. In 2010, the Director of Orkestra proposed to organise a seminar where two unrelated academic communities in the field of territorial development could meet: the English-speaking community and the Latin American one. The idea worked and we, exclusively working in an English-speaking environment, met Pablo Costamagna, one of the Latin American authors of this book. He invited Mari Jose Aranguren and me to give a lecture on the Basque case in a Master's course on Territorial Development in Rafaela, Argentina. This visit to Latin America triggered the inclusion of the work of the Brazilian pedagogue, Paulo Freire, in ARTD.

Up to then, we had framed our AR in the regional innovation literature, and we found out that Pablo Costamagna, together with Francisco Albuquerque, worked with concepts that were better suited to our practice with county development agencies. They had started working with *local economic development* and, when they understood that local problems required other territorial levels to be involved, they defined *territorial development* as a multi-scalar concept that connected municipalities, counties, provinces, regions and even some national policies. This would later be the inspiration to name our approach Action Research for Territorial Development.

Pablo joined Orkestra part-time and took his PhD at the University of the Basque Country. After his PhD, we wrote a book about facilitative actors of territorial development (Costamagna and Larrea, 2018). Like James, Pablo not only contributed to the development of ARTD in the Basque Country but also went on to develop ARTD in his own country, in Rafaela, Argentina. He did so in the context of the Master's degree in Territorial Development at the National Technological University in Rafaela and a related research institute they call Praxis.

This is the experience that Pablo shares in Chapter 4, where he discusses how they have combined the pedagogical approach they developed in Latin America with ARTD and its European influences. The author involved in the co-inquiry with Pablo is Teresa Castillo, who we also met in Chalmers and who shares with Pablo the desire to develop the *epistemology of the South*. Their decision to write their contributions in Spanish is consistent with their aims. The experiential post, by Sandro de Castro Pitano, takes ARTD to a context in Brazil that is highly influenced by the legacy of Paulo Freire.

Rafaela is not the only place in Argentina where ARTD is developing. In 2013, Silvina Romano approached us after talking to Pablo Costamagna and Paco Albuquerque. She had been educated as an economist, and through her experience as a policymaker, she had started looking for approaches to territorial development which were different from mainstream economics. She believed AR was for her. She came to Orkestra for two years in order to take her AR PhD. She became part of Orkestra, and it was there that she wrote part of her PhD on the role of universities in their territories. Of the many contributions this PhD made to the ARTD environment, I want to underline two. The first is Silvina's honesty in openly sharing her transformation process (Romano, 2018). Our environment had been completely focused on second-person AR, and her process made us aware of the potential benefits of first-person AR. The second contribution is her conclusion that the potential of university students as territorial actors is underestimated. This is an issue that James Karlsen elaborates on in Chapter 5. As a natural follow up to her PhD process, Silvina is currently experimenting with ARTD at the University of Tierra del Fuego (Argentina).

Complementing the chapters from James and Pablo, in Chapter 2, Silvina shares the potential of ARTD for universities willing to foster development in their territories. Alfredo Ortiz is Silvina's co-inquirer. He also decided to join this collaborative book project in Chalmers but knew Silvina's work beforehand through his editorial work in the Action Research Journal. It was also in Chalmers that we met Andrea Berardi, who, in his experiential post, is drawn to enquiring more about the relationships that made Silvina's experience possible.

#### d) *Gipuzkoa Sarean: a laboratory for ARTD*

The next stage, which goes from 2009 to the present day in our timeline, is the project that has most shaped ARTD: Gipuzkoa Sarean, known today as the Territorial Development Laboratory of Etorbizuna Eraikiz. A research team from Orkestra started participating in Gipuzkoa Sarean from its inception in 2009, and we proposed AR from the first day (we had not coined the term ARTD yet). The research team was made up of Mari Jose Aranguren, James Karlsen and I, and shortly after Ainhoa Arrona joined us.

Ainhoa was working for the Provincial Council in their Technical Secretariat and, consequently, was not initially part of Orkestra. However, the council proposed that to improve coordination, she should have her workplace in the institute, which situated her in between both organisations; namely, in between researchers and stakeholders in AR. She has never declared herself to be an action researcher, although she was later formally hired full-time by Orkestra. She has participated in the AR team all through the 2011-2015 political term, and she has been in charge of ARTD processes since 2018. Not even when she undertook her PhD process and started seeing herself as researcher did she claim to be an action researcher, but rather an observer of action research. I consider this is one of her main contributions to the ARTD environment: a continuous awareness and discussion on positionality which is visible in many of the chapters of this book. During her PhD process, Ainhoa approached policy sciences and, through observation of our environment, developed an argument about action researchers as policy analysts.

The role of action researchers as policy analysts is the contribution to ARTD that Ainhoa integrates into Chapter 7. Her co-inquirer, Koen Bartels is a scholar in policy sciences who has worked on the connection between policy analysis and AR and has helped us take our first steps in this intersection. In his experiential post, Leandro Lepratte takes us to Argentina, to a research environment only recently experimenting with AR through their collaboration with Pablo Costamagna and Praxis.

#### e) *The communicative turn in ARTD*

I open this section of the timeline with one reflection: two of the authors of this book that have joined ARTD in the last few years are professionals trained for or practising corporate communication.

In 2016, given the possibility of hiring someone for Gipuzkoa Sarean, we started to play with the idea of having someone with this profile (we called this profile communicators) involved in the team full-time. We wanted to explore the potential of communication in ARTD, connecting



it to our concepts of dialogue and participation. Maite Reizabal joined us right after she had finished her graduate studies in communication. By the time of the publication of this book, she will have temporarily left our research team to become a journalist. When on our team, she was in charge of the project newsletter, which lets everybody in the project know what everybody else is doing. But besides that, she experimented with videos as a way to systematise critical lessons learnt for the process. She also published interviews as a tool to develop stakeholders' engagement. She supported the construction of a digital platform for co-generative processes and did an experiment with participatory videos. She describes her role as "taking care of the voice of stakeholders in the process". She is another member of the ARTD environment who openly defined herself as a non-action researcher, making ARTD a pluralistic endeavour.

In Chapter 6, Maite experimented with the living spiral, a methodology proposed by her co-inquirer Thomas Macintyre, to find new ways to communicate the Territorial Development Laboratory project. Thomas is another co-inquirer who joined this process in Chalmers. The author of the experiential post is Eleonora Spinelly, a member of Praxis who has worked in the development of the pedagogical approach and its intersections with ARTD in Argentina.

But communication in ARTD has not exclusively focused on the voice of stakeholders. In the last few years, Patricia Canto has developed an approach in ARTD to communicate academic knowledge constructed through AR processes in more participatory ways than usually occurs in typical academic procedures. Patricia has vast experience in the communication team in Orkestra. She joined ARTD in 2014 when Orkestra was transforming its organisational structure to overcome, among other challenges, a sharp divide between research and administrative roles. Patricia was in the administration department as part of the communication team and helped James and me publish our 2014 book in English. She also took the lead in the negotiation for the rights in Basque, Norwegian and Spanish so that we could publish it in open access in these languages. When we got the rights, she told me that she would be happy to translate the book into Spanish.

The translation process was followed by her decision to take a PhD that combined her experience in communication with AR. This PhD enriched ARTD with an analytical framework on responsible communication of research which was put into practice by creating a digital platform to communicate one of our ARTD books dialogically (<https://dgroups.org/groups/perfadt>).

The contribution of Patricia in Chapter 10 takes her approach to responsible communication of research one step further by connecting it to third-person AR. For the writing of the chapter, she has collaborated with Petra Schweizer, who we met in Chalmers and who contributed with her positive energy to this process from the beginning. The experiential post is provided by Alejandro Barranquero, who came to Orkestra as member of the tribunal at Patricia's PhD defense and argued for the potential of these events to get to know people outside our ordinary networks. His participation in this book shows he was right.

#### f) *The future of ARTD*

The last stop in this timeline invites us to look into the future of ARTD. Amaia Zumeaga is a PhD student who had been part of Orkestra for less than one year when we started this

book process. Her educational background in entrepreneurial leadership and innovation makes praxis a natural approach to learning for her. In a way, she is walking the research path in the opposite direction from most of us, as she is now becoming familiar with mainstream research in her PhD courses after having chosen AR. Her PhD is the sixth in the ARTD environment, after Miren Estensoro, Pablo Costamagna, Silvina Romano, Ainhoa Arrona and Patricia Canto. It consolidates the strategy to use the PhD thesis as a threshold for moving into ARTD.

Amaia has written Chapter 3, which is about the role of PhDs in the creation of the ARTD environment, together with Mikel Zurbano. Mikel was co-supervisor for Miren Estensoro and Pablo Costamagna in their PhD process and has always been a friendly outsider of ARTD. Their co-inquirer is Fiammetta Wegner, who also joined this process in Chalmers. Her straightforward arguments about the potential of young researchers to transform AR made her a perfect candidate to contribute to the reflection in this chapter. Hans Christian Garmann Johnsen is the author of the experiential post. He has followed up the development of ARTD since its inception and contributed to it with his lessons on the philosophy of science in the University of Deusto.

### **The pluralistic approach to languages in the book**

In this section, I share how we have addressed the diversity of languages which the authors of the different chapters, short chapters and experiential posts bring to this book. The AR that inspires the contributions of this book has taken place in different parts of the world, where stakeholders and researchers interact in different languages. However, when the time comes to publish these experiences, English is “the undisputed lingua franca of scholarly exchange, the language of the most prestigious international conferences and journals, and [...] often the language used by multinational teams whose members are drawn from all around the globe” (Bennet, 2013, p. 169). This is evident in the decision of the authors of eight out of the ten chapters of the book to publish in English, even though none of us are native English speakers. We are aware that this decision impoverishes academia in our mother tongues.

Consequently, we decided to explore ways to generate awareness on this issue, making the book a space where different languages —mostly, but not exclusively English and Spanish— could live together. As a result, we have experimented with a multilingual book where different languages coexist. Each author has chosen the language for their main text, and two more languages for the abstracts. The reasons have sometimes been practical, in terms of co-inquirers understanding each other’s texts. Other times the choice has been more political.

Coexistence of languages can bring you, the reader, a certain discomfort. You might find in this book certain chapters, short chapters or experiential posts in languages that you do not understand and still, they have been written for you. We feel this is a good metaphor for the global challenges we are now facing. Whatever the solution, we will have to learn how to understand each other, without compelling us to express ourselves in one way. We thus invite you to experiment with this multilingual book.

For many of the authors, the book has presented the dilemma between reaching the English-speaking audience or the Spanish-speaking one, as both audiences are considerable. In order to make the contents of the book wholly accessible to both audiences, in 2021 we will publish a book that we have designed as a mirror of this one, with the English con-

tributions translated into Spanish and the Spanish ones into English. We have decided not to publish two books entirely written in each of the languages because we want these books to be a meeting point for both language communities.

## Final reflection

I wrote the first version of this introduction at the beginning of the book writing process. At that time, I made a clear distinction between roots (authors of the chapters, who were already part of our research environment) and wings (authors of the short chapters and experiential posts, most of whom I had yet to meet).

I am now aware that during the writing process, some of the wings have transformed into roots. They are helping us grow as a research environment, and I hope the collaboration that started with this book will continue in the future.

This is the lesson we have learnt about how AR environments grow: dare to fly to new places and let others influence you, and as you transform, they will become part of who you are, making your roots stronger and helping you dare fly higher.

I want to finish this introduction by thanking all the authors in this book; it has been a crazy and amazing adventure. I would especially like to thank Davydd Greenwood and Morten Levin, for being the roots of our roots and Hilary Bradbury, for being the wings of our wings.

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## **PART I**

Long term perspectives on the endeavour to construct *action research for territorial development*

## **PARTE I**

Miradas de largo plazo en la construcción de la *investigación acción para el desarrollo territorial*



## Chapter 1

# Organisational leadership to support the development of action research environments in university institutes: the case of Orkestra – Basque Institute of Competitiveness

*Mari Jose Aranguren*<sup>1</sup>

### **Laburpena**

*Ikerketa institutuetan ekintza-ikerketarako inguruneen garapena bultzatzeko erakunde-lidergoa: Orkestra-Lehiakortasunerako Euskal Institutuaren kasua*

Unibertsitateak ez dira ikerketa-ekintza (IE) gauzatzeko toki bakarrak, baina egungo gizarte erronkei erantzuteak eskatzen dituen eraldaketa sakonak bultzatzeko IE sustatu nahi bada, unibertsitateak oso leku aproposak dira. Unibertsitateetan egiten den IERI buruz dagoen literatura (Greenwood eta Levin, 2016), batez ere IE egiten duten ikertzaileek idatzia da, baina ez du kontutan izaten unibertsitateetako ikerketa zentroetako zuzendari edo kudeatzaileen ikuspegia. Kapitulu honen ekarpena ikuspegi horretan zentratzen da.

Ikerketa Zentroak oso ingurune egokiak dira IE egiteko, akademiak bere kontestuko garapen sozio-ekonomikoan gero eta paper garrantzitsuago jokatu beharko luketela dioten ikerketak gero eta ugariagoak baitira (Aranguren *et al.*, 2016a eta 2016b), baina unibertsitateetan ez dira askotan funtzio hori jokatzeko beharko liratekeen baldintza egokiak sortzen (Alcalde *et al.* 2017). Kapitulu honen helburua IE egiteko baldintza egokiak sortzeko ikerketa zentroetako zuzendariak jokatu dezaketen paperaren inguruan erreflexio bat egitean datza.

Erreflexio hau egiteko kapituluaren Orkestra-Lehiakortasuneko Euskal Institutuko (Deustuko Unibertsitatea) neure kudeaketa esperientzian oinarritzen naiz, Orkestran azken 13 urteetan nazioarteko gure lankideekin elkarlanean Lurralde Garapenerako Ikerketa Ekintza (LGIE) bultzatu baita. Orkestran, nire kudeaketa esperientzia aldatzen joan da: 2007-2012 bitartean, 12 pertsonaz osatutako Klusterrak, Berrikuntza eta Lurralde Garapenerako saileko koordinatzailea izan nintzen eta 2012tik aurrera Orkestrako (35 pertsona) Zuzendari Nagusia naiz.

Kapituluan Larrea (2019) lanean inspiratu naiz. Lan horretan, kudeaketako ikuspegia kontutan izaten bada ere, ikertzailearen ikuspegitik LGIE sortzeko bititako esperientzian

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<sup>1</sup> Orkestra-Basque Institute of Competitiveness, University of Deusto.

oinarritzen da. Kapitulu honetan ordea kudeaketatik egiten dut irakurketa, eta zehazki nire kudeaketan eragin handia izan duen «lidergo estiloan» zentratzen naiz. Lidergo estiloan lagungarrien izan zaidan markoa Ignaziotar Lidergoa izan da.

Guibert (2017a)-k, Loiolako Ignazioren bizitzan eta hark idatzitako dokumentuetan oinarrituz Ignaziotar lidergoaren ezaugarri nagusienak azpimarratzen ditu. Haietatik, kapitulu honetan bereziki kontutan izan ditudan ezaugarriak hauek izan dira: (1) Gauzak, pertsonak eta instituzioak aldatzeko aspirazioak dituen pertsona izatea (Ignaziotar Magis-a); (2) pertsonatan zentratzen den lidergoa izatea, haien zerbitzura egoteko, beste pertsonetan konfiantza duen pertsona izatea; (3) kolaboratzaileak bilatzen dituen pertsona izatea eta besteekin kolaboratzen dakiena; (4) bere arduran dagoen erakundearen misioa zerbitzatzeko eta bere sostengarritasunerako antolaketa eta instituzionalizazio modu berrietan pentsatzeko gai den pertsona izatea; (5) bere erakundean pertsonen giza ezaugarriak zainduko dituen pertsona izatea. Ignaziotar Lidergoaren markoa eta nire kudeaketa esperientzian oinarrituz ondorengo galdera lantzen da kapituluan: Nola eragin du nire lidergo estiloak IEren garapenean?

Kapituluan burutzen den erreflexioaren helburua ez da IEren garapena errazteko bultzatu beharko litzatekeen lidergoaren patroi bat proposatzea, baizik eta IE bultzatu nahi duten ikertzaileei kudeaketako ikuspegia hobeto ulertzen laguntzea eta IE bultzatu nahi den erakundeetako kudeatzaileetan IE errazteko balditzen inguruan dituzten erronkei buruzko erreflexioa sustatzea.

## Resumen

### *Liderazgo organizacional para el apoyo al desarrollo de entornos para la investigación-acción en institutos de investigación: el caso de Orkestra-Instituto Vasco de Competitividad*

Las universidades no son el único contexto en el que se desarrollan los procesos de investigación- acción (IA), pero son contextos idóneos si se quieren impulsar procesos de IA para abordar transformaciones profundas que respondan a los grandes retos sociales.

La literatura sobre la IA que se desarrolla en las universidades está escrita fundamentalmente por investigadores que hacen IA (Greenwood y Levin, 2016), pero no tiene en cuenta la perspectiva de la dirección o de los gestores de los centros de investigación de las universidades.

Dada la proliferación de trabajos que subrayan que la academia debe jugar un papel cada vez más activo en el desarrollo socioeconómico de los lugares en los que se encuentra (Aranguren *et al.* 2016a eta 2016b), los centros de investigación son contextos idóneos para desarrollar la IA. Sin embargo, muchas veces en las universidades no se generan las condiciones adecuadas para desarrollar esa función (Alcalde *et al.* 2017). El objetivo de este capítulo es hacer una reflexión sobre el papel que puede desempeñar la dirección de los centros de investigación para generar los contextos adecuados para desarrollar la IA.

Para abordar esta reflexión me baso en mi propia experiencia de gestión en Orkestra-Instituto Vasco de Competitividad (Universidad de Deusto), dado que, a lo largo de los últimos 13 años, en Orkestra se ha impulsado la *investigación acción para el desarrollo territorial*, en colaboración con otros investigadores a nivel internacional. Mi experiencia de gestión en Orkestra ha evolucionado de ser coordinadora del Área de Clústeres, Innovación y Desarrollo Territorial (2007-2012) con 12 personas a asumir la Dirección general de Orkestra a partir del 2012 (35 personas).

En el capítulo me he inspirado en Larrea (2019). En ese trabajo, aunque se tienen en cuenta aspectos de gestión, la perspectiva del análisis es la experiencia de la persona investigadora al impulsar la IADT. Sin embargo, en este capítulo, la reflexión se aborda desde la perspectiva de la gestión, más concretamente se centra en el «estilo de liderazgo» de la dirección, aspecto que tiene una gran incidencia en la gestión. El marco del estilo de liderazgo que más ha incidido en mí ha sido el del Liderazgo Ignaciano.



Guibert (2017a), basándose en la vida de Ignacio de Loyola y en sus escritos subraya las características esenciales del estilo de Liderazgo Ignaciano. Las que se han considerado particularmente en este capítulo son las siguientes: (1) Ser persona que aspira a cambiar las cosas, las personas y las instituciones (Magis Ignaciano); (2) Tener un liderazgo basado en las personas, al servicio de ellas y que confía en las personas; (3) Ser persona que busca y sabe colaborar con otras personas; (4) Ser persona que es capaz de servir a la misión de su institución y de pensar en nuevas formas de organización e institucionalización para la sostenibilidad de su institución; (5) Ser persona que cuida la calidad humana en su institución.

Basándome en el marco del Liderazgo Ignaciano y en mi experiencia de gestión, la pregunta sobre la que reflexiono en este capítulo es: ¿Cómo ha incidido mi estilo de liderazgo en el desarrollo de la IA? El objetivo de esta reflexión no es proponer un patrón de estilo de liderazgo para generar contextos de IA, sino ayudar, por un lado, a que los investigadores en la acción puedan entender mejor la perspectiva de la gestión, y por otro, a generar en los gestores de centros de investigación una reflexión sobre los retos para impulsar buenas condiciones para la IA.

# Organisational leadership to support the development of action research environments in university institutes: the case of Orkestra – Basque Institute of Competitiveness

## Introduction

Whilst it is true that universities are not the only environment where action research is carried out, they are a relevant environment if action research (AR) is to play a significant role in facing societal challenges in times of profound transformation.

Indeed, literature about AR in universities does exist (Levin and Greenwood, 2018), but it is mainly written by action researchers and often misses the perspective I want to make explicit in this chapter, i.e., the perspective of research institute managers in universities.

Research institutes can be an excellent context in which to develop AR. Although academia is increasingly asked to play a strategic role in place-based processes of socioeconomic development (Aranguren *et al.* 2016a and 2016b), universities do not always facilitate the working environments needed to fulfil this role (Alcalde *et al.* 2017). As Levin and Greenwood (2018) highlight, conventional disciplinary organisation and the separation of pure and applied work in universities is inimical to the development of AR. In this regard, research institutes, whose mission is to serve as change agents, can offer the right context to develop AR.

However, these institutes are not exclusively a place for researchers. They are collective endeavours, where management plays a relevant role. The goal of this chapter is to reflect on the role of managers in the development of AR environments.

The experience that inspires this chapter is my role as manager at Orkestra, the Basque Institute of Competitiveness (University of Deusto), where Action Research for Territorial Development (ARTD) has been constructed together with our international partnerships. I started at Orkestra as a researcher in 2006, developing projects in collaboration with another researcher and with territorial actors, which were mainly Basque local development agencies and cluster associations. From 2007 to 2012, I was the coordinator of the area of Clusters<sup>2</sup>, Innovation and Territorial Development at Orkestra, and during this period, I conducted several research projects while also managing a group of 12 people. In 2012, I was appointed general manager of Orkestra, and since then, my main role has been to lead Orkestra (a team of 34 people), and although I have participated in some research projects as a researcher, this has become a secondary role for me.

My inspiration for ARTD when writing this chapter comes from Larrea (2019), where she shares her perspective on how ARTD evolved at Orkestra, transforming not only the Institute but also some areas in the University of Deusto. Although she incorporates the role of managers in her article, her perspective is, unavoidably, that of a researcher. In this chapter, I depart from that piece of work in order to incorporate the perspective of the management of research organisations in ARTD.

Organisations and their management is a multidimensional issue, all of which could not be addressed in this chapter. That is why I focus on the feature that I consider to be more determinant in my management role: my leadership style. During the last few years, I have cons-

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<sup>2</sup> According to Porter (1990), clusters are “geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, services providers, firms in related industries, training institutions and support organizations linked around technologies or end product within a local area or region”.

ciously reflected on and worked to develop my leadership style, and the framework that has helped me most is *Ignatian* leadership (its secular equivalent is service leadership). There are different Catholic reform movements relevant to AR, such as the Franciscans, the liberation theology, etc. My approach, the Ignatian one, is based on the Society of Jesus. I studied at and now work at the University of Deusto, a private university owned by the Society of Jesus.

According to Guibert (2016, p. 6), Ignatian leadership is inspired by the life and experience of Ignatius of Loyola. Based on the analysis of Ignatius's life and the documents he wrote, Guibert (2017a) highlights the main features of Ignatian Leadership. I use the following for this paper: (1) to be a person with many aspirations who wants to change things, people and institutions (Ignatian *magis*); (2) to be a person who trusts others and who puts others at the centre so as to serve them; (3) to be a person who finds collaborators and knows how to collaborate; (4) to be a person capable of thinking of new ways of institutionalisation and organisation that serve the mission and who takes care of his/her organisation and its sustainability; (5) to be a person who cares about human qualities in the organisation.

As Guibert (2017b, p. 14) also highlights, Ignatian leadership is totally compatible with service leadership, because the service dimension is fundamental in both types of leaderships. Dierendonck (2011) defines service leadership as of leaders who combine their motivation to lead with a need to serve. Service leadership is demonstrated by empowering and developing people, by expressing humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance and stewardship, and by providing direction.

With this theoretical background in mind, I pose a twofold research question that inspires this chapter. How has my style of leadership influenced AR? And how has AR influenced my style of leadership?

To answer these questions, I have gathered data on my management role in the different stages of the development of ARTD at Orkestra. Combining the concepts in the theoretical framework with my experiences at Orkestra, I share a discussion of the role that research institute managers play in the development of AR. The aim of the discussion is not to generate any pattern, which I cannot do based exclusively on my own experience, but rather to help researchers better understand the managerial perspective, and also to help managers reflect on their challenges when developing environments for AR.

## **Theoretical background: Ignatian leadership**

### *An introduction to Ignatian leadership*

As stated by Guibert (2016, p. 6), Ignatian leadership means that it is inspired by the life and experience of Ignacio of Loyola. Ignatian leadership, therefore, goes beyond the Jesuits and is also a leadership style for non-Jesuits if it is inspired by his experience. The life and experience of Ignatius of Loyola are reflected in the Spiritual Exercises he wrote to help renew people's spiritual growth and to find God in one's life. But the key element regarding how he led people to respond to the Society of Jesus's Mission is also reflected in the Constitutions and the Letters he wrote. Based on the analysis of Ignatius's life, together with these documents and also the leadership literature, Guibert (2017a) highlights the following main aspects of Ignatian leaders:

1. A person with many aspirations who wants to change things, people and institutions. This refers to the Ignatian *magis*: doing more for others than for ourselves. The aspiration is to serve others and God. It is a nonconformist style that always aspires to improve oneself to be able to serve others.

2. A generous and committed person, where the focus is not on finding self-security but on opening one's heart, finding inner freedom, and being willing to be vulnerable, to risk and share.
3. A person with excellent social skills: leadership is about human relations. It is not about applying indicators and controlling people but about accompanying them in all their human dimensions.
4. A person who knows himself or herself and manages his/her own inner life well. To serve others, you first need to know yourself.
5. A person with a deep understanding of the facts. A person who has a wide perspective when reading situations and who has the inner freedom to make choices.
6. A person who puts others at the centre so as to serve them and who trusts others. A person who accepts and loves people as they are.
7. A person who finds new ways of doing things and produces changes to be able to serve.
8. A person who finds collaborators and who knows how to collaborate.
9. A person capable of thinking of new ways of institutionalisation and organisation to serve the mission and who takes care of the organisation and its sustainability.
10. A person who cares about human qualities in the organisation, and about honesty, virtue and kindness in people.

### *Why is Ignatian leadership suitable for AR?*

AR aims to contribute, through research, to generating new actionable knowledge that is valuable for action and that contributes to academic knowledge. The mission of Orkestra is very connected to this idea, as its mission is to contribute, through research, to the improvement of real competitiveness of the Basque Country and the welfare of its citizens, as well as to generate new knowledge on regional competitiveness.

In order to achieve these two impacts, i.e., impact in practice and academic impact, in AR it is crucial that there is dialogue and collaboration with the different societal actors who, together with their decisions, contribute to the competitiveness and welfare of territories. In addition to this, it is fundamental to define a research agenda that is connected to the real challenges actors face and to define it in collaboration with them, as well as to co-generate new knowledge to be able to address these challenges together with the actors. This means that the researcher should aspire to produce change and have the right attitude to collaborate and work together with the territorial actors to jointly generate new knowledge and contribute to addressing the issues at stake. If the management style of the researcher's working context facilitates and values these aspirations and attitudes, this will create a better environment for developing AR.

There are five characteristics of Ignatian leadership that facilitate the development of better environments for AR. The first characteristic is *magis*, the aspiration to change things, people, and institutions. AR is about generating change through research, and this is easier if institutional leaders also value and try to produce change. The second characteristic is that Ignatian leaders put others at the centre to be able to serve them. If we have a leader who is focused on serving people in the organisation and elsewhere, it will also be easier for us to serve others. And AR researchers need to have a serving attitude, as they have to try to help the actors meet their challenges. The third crucial characteristic of Ignatian leadership is that collaborators are needed to be able to respond to the mission. If leadership itself follows a collaborative approach to work, this culture will facilitate the development of collaborations

by members of the organisation, which is key to the AR approach. The fourth fundamental characteristic of Ignatian leadership is that the leaders need to have the capability to find new ways of institutionalisation and organisation to be able to respond to the mission; i.e., they should be flexible if the organisation needs changing to contribute better to the mission. This flexibility helps AR researchers find the best modes of collaboration with the actors in order to help them. And finally, caring about human qualities, which is another key aspect of Ignatian leadership, facilitates taking care of people who take care of others.

### **ARTD at Orkestra: challenges, actions, and leadership in management**

For the development of the case, I adopted a self-reflective case study approach. While self-reflective or biographical approaches can be difficult to generalise, they offer the significant advantage of illuminating the details of experience (Tight, 2012). Moreover, it is well acknowledged that single case studies are particularly useful when there is a need to capture the complexity of a phenomenon in depth, so as to generate concrete, practical knowledge that is, by definition, context-dependent (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Stake, 1995).

#### *A managerial perspective on ARTD*

In Larrea (2019), Miren Larrea presents the development process of ARTD in Orkestra in which an average of 10 researchers and research assistants were directly involved. Although her article mainly focuses on the perspective of research teams and not management, the case focuses on the role of the two people that initiated the process. One of them is Miren, a researcher who joined the Institute in 2007 and has focused on developing ARTD since 2008. The other individual is me. I joined the Institute in 2006 as a researcher, and in 2007, I took on the responsibility of coordinating one of the departments. I became general manager in 2012, and since then, I have supported ARTD from my position as manager.

In 2006 I was working at the Faculty of Economics and Management of the University of Deusto. My main motivation to join Orkestra was its mission of carrying out research for the *real* improvement of Basque Country competitiveness. I believed in the transformative capability we could develop through research. Accordingly, as Larrea (2019) underlines, I always presented the transformative mission of the Institute as something that everyone should respond to. In the first stages, I learnt that AR was a much more effective approach to foster transformation than the traditional and positivistic methods. I had the opportunity to learn this because in the years previous to the creation of Orkestra, I had been experimenting with both approaches to research: the positivistic approach adopted in my PhD and the AR approach in the projects in collaboration with Miren, and I felt that the second approach was more transformative (Karlsen *et al.* 2012). I found two main things. On the one hand, that an essential aspect for developing transformative capabilities for research was to foster an organisational culture based on some key common principles that guided the people at the Institute in finding their way to carry out transformative research. During our internal reflections at Orkestra, I identified five main principles that would help create a culture of transformative research<sup>3</sup> (commitment to change; global vision, anticipation, and international projection; collaboration, openness, and flexibility; development of a systemic view; and independence and a constructive, critical view). When seen through the lenses of these principles, ARTD appeared to be a

<sup>3</sup> Those principles are reflected in an internal document of Orkestra on Transformative Research.

very solid approach to carry out transformative research. On the other hand, I acknowledged that depending on the interpretation of each person at the organisation, concerning the kind of transformation that he or she should foster with stakeholders, members of the organisation could adopt research approaches other than AR<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, carrying out a pragmatic AR approach which uses any method that supports the work is a coherent attitude towards research. I believe that one of the unique values of Orkestra is how we do research, and I consider ARTD to be an example of how we, at Orkestra, conceptualise transformative research.

### *Different stages of ARTD from the managerial perspective*

To share how ARTD has evolved at Orkestra and the challenges and actions that I, as a manager, took to foster ARTD at the Institute, I have split this development into the same four stages that Larrea (2019) presented in her work (see table 1). For each of them, in Table 1, I share what I consider to be the challenges I met, the actions I fostered, and the dimensions of leadership that influenced those actions. The following subsection presents my perspective on each of these stages.

**Table 1. Stages of ARTD development at Orkestra. Challenges and actions taken by the management and contributions from leadership**

Period	ARTD at Orkestra	Challenges and actions related to ARTD	Key aspects of leadership
2006-2008	Antecedents to the decision to develop AR at Orkestra	Collaboration and construction of social capital with actors is time consuming, need for profiles to facilitate it and need for the board and stakeholders to believe in the potential of ARTD so as to implement Orkestra's mission	Aspirations to improve, open to change and find collaborators
2008-2010	First organisational attempt to develop AR at Orkestra	Facilitate learning about AR in order to increase the transformation capacity	Put other people at the centre (wide perspective)
2010-2014	The development of AR in specific projects and organisational change	From area coordinator to general manager. Organisational change. Trust-based internal and external relationships	New modes of organisation, human qualities
2014-2016	Cultural change and reappearance of AR onstage	Effort to go further with the transformative capability. Second attempt to facilitate learning about AR	Many aspirations, find collaborators

<sup>4</sup> Based on the internal document on Orkestra's distinctive value which I presented to Orkestra's Board in February 2015.

### *Antecedents to the decision to develop AR at Orkestra (2006-2008)*

My first decision to support ARTD was when I decided to involve a researcher who did research in practice. That is why Miren Larrea joined Orkestra in 2007. I felt that to fulfil the transformative mission of Orkestra, we needed to collaborate and construct social capital with different key actors to find out about and understand their challenges, and thus contribute with new knowledge to tackle these challenges. So, during 2007, Miren and I explored a collaborative project using an ARTD approach with local development agencies and discovered that developing projects in collaboration was very time-consuming. To facilitate the interaction with stakeholders, we needed people with a different profile and hence decided to hire someone to help with this interaction. But the initial idea regarding the organisation of Orkestra was to hire mainly researchers, and I had to convince the administration board and the management team to add this new profile. When our general manager asked me to make a presentation at the board meeting of November 2007, I underlined that “if we want to be a transformative institute, we need to collaborate with different stakeholders, and to do that, we need people capable of dynamizing these collaborations”. In 2008 we hired someone without any academic profile who could facilitate the interactive processes with stakeholders. This particular discussion illustrates that there was a perception in the organisation that action research was not research, or at least that it was academically dubious. The way in which we overcame this situation was not by trying to convince everybody that it was *also* research but by demonstrating it with actions, i.e., working on generating transformations and also publishing academic papers. One of my main roles at this stage was to discuss the desirability of developing action research both with our administration board and our management team.

The main feature of Ignatian leadership that helped me in this particular stage was my strong aspiration to improve our organisation, to open it to change, and find outside collaborators.

### *First organisational attempt to develop AR at Orkestra (2008-2010)*

As presented in Larrea (2019), it was in this period that Miren wrote a document about the changes that would be necessary to create an AR environment in Orkestra. We wanted to consolidate an AR team at the Institute, and we wanted it to adopt AR as part of its unique value proposition.

I believed that AR was a better approach for the transformative mission of the Institute than the traditional research we carried out in our research programme. My motto was “Reports do not change territories. If we want to be an agent of change, we also need to change the way in which we do research”. With this idea in mind, we created a reflection group where we shared our aim of developing AR through regular meetings for one year. By the end of the year, however, we felt that we might have been pushing too hard. My view is that, on the one hand, the people in the group did not have any experience in AR and, on the other hand, they had a different view from us about the type of transformation that Orkestra should foster through research. I realised that to be able to decide freely whether we were convinced or not about the AR approach, we needed to experience it in practice in order to have a deeper understanding of AR processes. As area coordinator, I felt that I had to be very clear about the transformative mission of Orkestra but without forcing one way of achieving it, even if I believed that AR was the most transformative approach.

My role, therefore, during this stage, was to facilitate a working environment where each person could find his or her own way of bringing about this transformation through research. I tried to develop an open and collaborative approach to research with different

stakeholders, and the number of researchers interacting with them grew. In the area meeting of June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2008, I made a presentation where, for the first time, I used the term *transformative research* as a central concept in my understanding of the Institute.

I think that the feature of Ignatian leadership that best explains my leadership throughout this stage is the aim to put other people, in this case, members of Orkestra, at the centre of my activity.

### *The development of AR in specific projects and organisational change (2010-2014)*

As discussed in Larrea (2019), it was during this period that ARTD evolved at Orkestra, following a pluralistic approach to AR which integrated “not a team of action researchers, but rather heterogeneous teams of researchers and practitioners” (Karlsen & Larrea, 2014, p. 121). After giving up our first attempt to create an internal reflection process for the development of AR, ARTD progressed mainly in the context of research projects.

At the organisational level, the new general manager that had been recruited in 2009 delegated the coordination of each area to coordinators. Consequently, the way of working on projects and the way of managing people depended significantly on the leadership style of each coordinator (Alcalde *et al.*, 2017). In 2012, the general manager left and I took on this role. At the start of this period, a strategic reflection process for the development of the 2013-2015 Strategic Plan brought to light various concerns about Orkestra’s functioning, notably the cultural differences between the areas, the need to carry out cross-cutting projects between them, and the need to build a more open organisation to address Orkestra’s mission more effectively.

I proposed to make the organisation flatter, eliminating areas, and opting instead for an organisation based on projects. This organization model is at odds with the essence of university organisation, and it was possible to adopt it thanks to Orkestra’s governance, which has a high degree of autonomy from the university. I decided to take trust-based management as a guiding principle for this new organisational structure. This approach was inspired in part by Román (2007, p. 1): “Trust is what feeds projects; it is the germ of creativity; a fertilizer so that talent can spread its wings; a seed that brings out the best in each one; an invaluable driver of creation. When there is trust, all talent seems better than it is; it expands; it opens up and reaches unexpected heights. Trust acts as a leverage factor”.

In November 2012, at a meeting with all members of Orkestra, I shared my intention by saying: “the Institute will be based more on trust than control, though I acknowledge the need for both components to be present”<sup>5</sup>.

To guide the development of this new organisational model, the following principles were established. The model should (1) respond to the singularity of the Institute, i.e., its capacity to carry out transformative research; (2) be dynamic, agile, and flexible to adapt to rapid changes in the surroundings; (3) facilitate that each person, with his or her pro-active attitude and capacities, can add value in line with the Institute’s mission; (4) be open, given that the singularity of Orkestra requires work to be carried out in collaboration with other agents of competitiveness; and (5) facilitate conversations and experimentation for ongoing learning and change<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Presentation in the general meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Those principles are reflected in an internal document of Orkestra on Transformative Research.



At this stage, I firmly believed that ARTD could be more transformative than other research approaches. However, my way of supporting it was not straightforward. I created an environment where researchers could develop new (to the organisation) research approaches as long as they met the previous principles. I felt that there were people in the organisation that would develop AR in this context. Furthermore, after we had given up our initial reflection group, ARTD was made less explicit in Orkestra's formal agenda and was developed in the context of specific projects.

When I became the general manager of Orkestra, the Ignatian feature that guided my work was my motivation to explore new forms of organisation that would take us closer to our mission while increasing the human quality of our project.

### *Cultural change in the organisation and new efforts to develop ARTD (2014-2016)*

The organisational change led to a flat organisation (based on projects rather than departments), which reinforced flexibility and participative decision-making, encouraged trust-based and distributed leadership, and promoted the importance of developing sustainable interactions with the external environment (Alcalde *et al.* 2017). This trust-based distributed leadership helped different researchers at Orkestra take on the responsibility of working on research projects with various key stakeholders in long-term, trust-based collaborations. In accordance with the mission of Orkestra, they worked with those stakeholders on facilitating change, through research, to meet the stakeholders' challenges of competitiveness.

I felt at that moment that Miren's learning experience of fostering ARTD at Orkestra and the Gipuzkoa Sarean<sup>7</sup> project was invaluable and could facilitate a learning process for researchers trying to foster transformative research in their projects. In our first attempt at generating an AR learning space at Orkestra in 2008, we did not have this practical experience. That is why I asked Miren to facilitate a new insider learning process, and thus during 2015 and 2016, a second insider learning process took place. As explained in Larrea (2019), ten researchers and research assistants participated in this learning process through monthly workshops. Some of the participants' aims in the process were to define a transformative communication approach for the Institute through AR or to develop a guide for training processes at Orkestra inspired by educational AR. When the process was halfway through, Miren delegated this responsibility to other people. In private, she told me that she did not feel entitled to facilitate the process. I helped her with this transition.

My interpretation of this stage is that there are different levels and intensities of transformation and, even though Orkestra's mission is assumed by its members, each of us interprets our role in a different way. Miren had in mind more profound and more structural transformations than most of the other participants in the learning process. Consequently, I faced the challenge of managing a situation in which the transformative role of Orkestra was interpreted in multiple ways. As a researcher, I believe that ARTD is the most powerful approach for in-depth transformations. However, as the general manager of Orkestra, I need to facilitate an evolutionary approach to the transformations that we are capable of fostering now in order to reach more profound changes later. The need for transformation has to be acknowledged both by the stakeholders and the researcher working with them. This acknowledgement is gained over time and through

<sup>7</sup> See further information on this project in the Introduction of this book.

capability development, not only by the researchers and research assistants at Orkestra but also by our main stakeholders.

The Ignatian feature that I use to explain my experience in this stage is the relevance of living with a multiplicity of aspirations, trying to find collaborators and not people that will merely obey.

**Discussion: can any management style of leadership be supportive of AR? What are the implications?**

This chapter focuses on the characteristics of leadership that can hinder or facilitate the creation of better environments for AR in research institutes at universities. It aims to help managers of this kind of organisation who are interested in creating AR environments and also to help researchers interested in working with AR approaches to reflect on which characteristics of their organisational leadership could be useful for developing AR.

In this final section, I synthesise the main insights I derive from the previously presented narrative of how management and AR have coexisted at Orkestra. I underline four key characteristics of AR and their connection with Ignatian leadership that best explain my interpretation of my own leadership style throughout these years.

**Table 2. Core ARTD features supported by Ignatian leadership**

Core ARTD features	Ignatian leadership feature that facilitates them
Co-generation of actionable knowledge with stakeholders	Aspiration to change
Academic and societal impact also inside universities	Aspiration to change institutions and flexibility to adapt organisations to better respond to the mission
Direct dialogue between researchers and stakeholders	Put others at the centre so as to serve them
Negotiation of the research agenda with stakeholders	Seek collaboration, not obedience

a) *Co-generation of actionable knowledge with stakeholders*

One of the key characteristics of ARTD is connected with its aim. Action researchers aim to produce change through research, and that is why the co-generation of knowledge among researchers and actors, together with the generation of actionable knowledge, are features of ARTD. One of the key characteristics of Ignatian leadership is also the aspiration to change (*magis*). That means improving one’s competency in order to serve others better and build a better world (for Christians to build the Kingdom of God on earth). If university and research centre managers had the aspiration to bring about change, the researcher’s aspirations would be more aligned with the aspiration of the organisation’s leader which would result in a better environment for ARTD.

### b) *Academic and societal impact also inside universities*

However, the aspiration to change cannot be interpreted exclusively as an aim to help others change. Universities themselves also need to change to contribute more effectively to change. In the case of ARTD, there is an emphasis to achieve not only academic impact but also societal impact inside the university. The incentives system and modes of organisation have to be adapted to evaluate not only the generation of knowledge but also the practical impact of their research. An Ignatian feature that supports this aspiration by action researchers is the aspiration to change institutions, to make them useful. Consequently, for an Ignatian leader, the mode of organisation has to be flexible to better meet its mission, which in practice was possible because of the governance structure of Orkestra.

### c) *Direct dialogue between researchers and stakeholders*

Direct dialogue between researchers and stakeholders is a feature of ARTD required by the aim of action researchers to contribute with useful knowledge to stakeholders' challenges. Researchers need to know stakeholders, their aspirations, and values to better contribute to responding to their challenges. This is an approach that implies wanting to move from serving through research to serving through action. In order to achieve this, a useful key feature of Ignatian leadership is the leader's motivation to serve others. If the leader gives the example with his or her attitude of serving others, it will be easier to create a culture of serving others. And although it will not be enough, because the researcher's motivation should also be to serve, it will be helpful even if nowadays research policies following the education ministry's incentives reinforce disciplines and pure academic results at the expense of engagement and interdisciplinarity.

### d) *Negotiation of the research agenda with stakeholders*

And last but not least, the negotiation of a research agenda with stakeholders is another key characteristic of ARTD. Despite potential differences in perspective and interests, action researchers recognise the need to collaborate with stakeholders in order to generate actionable knowledge. Another key characteristic of Ignatian leaders is that he or she will seek to find collaborators, not people that merely obey him or her. If the leader finds collaborators, the culture of the organisation will be collaborative, and this will facilitate researchers to build a collaborative relationship with stakeholders.

I close this section with a final reflection. The thread running through this chapter helps us understand how the Ignatian features adopted during my leadership *facilitated* the generation of an ARTD environment in Orkestra. But I think that the thread could also have been interpreted the other way around, by analysing how the Ignatian features of my leadership style were *reinforced* by the development of ARTD at Orkestra.

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## Short-Chapter 1

# About leadership, transformation and action research: Brief comments on the chapter

Danilo R. Streck<sup>1</sup>

### Resumo

*Sobre liderança, transformação e pesquisa-ação: Breves comentários sobre o capítulo*

No capítulo «Liderança organizacional para apoiar o desenvolvimento de ambientes de pesquisa-ação em institutos de pesquisa: o caso do Instituto Orkestra-Basco de Competitividade» Mari Jose Aranguren reflete sobre o desenvolvimento de seu papel como diretora em um instituto de pesquisa que desenvolve práticas de pesquisa-ação para o desenvolvimento territorial. Ela identifica importantes características da pesquisa-ação que encontram eco na tradição jesuíta de liderança, como aspiração à mudança, colaboração, serviço ao outro e flexibilidade institucional para servir a missão. O ponto central de seu argumento é o conceito de transformação, onde podemos identificar três dimensões: a abertura para a autorreflexão; as mudanças dos arranjos institucionais para cumprir mais adequadamente sua missão; a transformação coletiva do território como espaço de convivência. O capítulo de Mari Jose chama nossa atenção para o papel chave de administradores e líderes na criação de condições subjetivas e objetivas para o desenvolvimento de pesquisas-ação. O estilo testemunhal é um convite para aprender com ela e com os outros.

### Abstract

*About leadership, transformation and action research: Brief comments on the chapter*

In the chapter "Organizational leadership to support the development of action research environments in research institutes: the case of Orkestra- Basque Institute of Competitiveness" Mari Jose Aranguren reflects on the development of her role as director in a research institute that practices action research for territorial development. She identifies key features of action research that resonate with the Jesuit tradition of leadership, such as aspiration for change, collaboration, service to the other and institutional flexibility to serve

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the mission. Central to her argument is the concept of transformation where one can identify three dimensions: the openness for self-reflection; the changes of the institutional arrangements to more adequately fulfil its mission; the collective transformation of the territory as the space for living together. Mari Jose's chapter brings to our attention the key role of managers and leaders for creating subjective and objective conditions for developing action research. The testimonial style is an invitation for learning with her and with others.

## About leadership, transformation and action research: Brief comments on the chapter

Writing a short chapter to Mari Jose Aranguren's article has been a challenging learning experience for me. First of all, it implied coming to terms with the adequate attitude for relating with a text that expresses a deep personal and professional self-reflection. Having had the opportunity to dialogue with Mari Jose during the process of producing the text has helped to develop admiration and respect for her courage to open up for discussion her own growth process as researcher and manager. The testimonial style of the text provoked me, as reader, to reflect on my own experience as researcher and as team member and leader, bringing to attention my own shortcomings and eventual contributions which, on its turn, constitute the not so solid ground from where I write my comments.

There was also the need for an institutional and epistemological displacement on my part. Mari Jose writes from the perspective of a research institute (Orkestra) based at a Jesuit university (Deusto) and as such is part of a large global network of educational institutions pertaining to the Company of Jesus founded by Ignatius of Loyola in 1534. Although working for over two decades in a Brazilian Jesuit university (Unisinos University) I cannot claim to be an inside knower of the principles that guide management and knowledge production with an Ignatian approach. This personal and professional experience, nevertheless, is sufficient to sense that there is much in common in institutions that, while embedded in local realities, base their work on general principles that bind them together internationally.

Among the many facets of the text that deserve attention I highlight some that seem to be especially relevant for action research. Mari Jose correctly points out that the perspective of managers of research institutes in universities is usually overlooked. I guess we could broaden the scope to include university staff that hold managerial positions and have similar attributions and responsibilities. The role of these persons, as Mari Jose points out, goes far beyond controlling the flow of individual projects, looking for financial support and evaluating reports. They can have an active role in promoting reflection on the type of research that may affect positively the life of people and communities.

They are key actors for creating subjective and objective conditions that are necessary for democratic participation, which is a requirement for action research (Fricke, 2013). One of the objective conditions, as well highlighted in the chapter, are the institutional arrangements that create spaces for collective work. Of particular importance is the transdisciplinary approach, not only for breaking up the dividing lines between academic departments and disciplines but including practitioners as co-producers of actionable knowledge.

The subjective conditions are basically related to values and ethical principles. One of these conditions is trust. Mari Jose, as manager, trusts that each member of the team

can contribute from his/her own professional and personal experience for the goals of the institute, which, on its turn, has its purpose linked to the development of the communities involved in research and development. As such, she is also well aware of the fact that there are different understandings about research and that the construction of a common ground from where to work together is a permanent challenge for the leader. This seems to be an important precondition for building trust with the stakeholders in their territories.

Her motto that “A report does not change territories” brings us to the core of her understanding of the role of social research as related to transformation. There can be identified various levels or dimensions to transformation. One of these dimensions that is basic to this text is the personal openness to one’s own experience. Drawing on the Ignatian concept of *Magis* Mari Jose points to the unfinished nature of our humanness. *Magis*, as conceived by Mari Jose, is a call for non-conformity with the *status quo* given the possibility to transcend conditions that present themselves as limiting situations (Freire, 1981).

Transformation also has to do with the way research is carried out. If the aim is the development of the territory as a totality, considering the weaknesses and the potentialities of all stakeholders, research should be a process that involves as much as possible all of them as producers of knowledge that has practical effects, at the same time that it goes beyond mere applicability to specific situations. Mari Jose shows that there is a close link of knowledge democracy with the way leadership is exercised, with the way the team organizes itself and with the way researchers relate to the subjects involved in the process of knowing and transforming their reality.

A third dimension of transformation in territorial development, is the concept of social and environmental justice. In a recent document (*A promoção da justiça socioambiental na educação superior jesuíta*) the topic dedicated to research states that a Jesuit university needs to ask for whom and for what purpose one does research. Independently of the type of organization and community, the perspective should be that one of the poor: “An organism that makes of the promotion of justice an essential dimension of its mission needs to ask to what degree research is carried out in the perspective of the poor, attempting to improve their living conditions, then it is in their suffering that prominently the dehumanization of unjust social structures reveal themselves.” (Secretariado, 2015, p. 66).

In this sense, territorial development points toward a collectivity that inhabits the same space, sharing its resources and working to improve the life of the whole community. This is certainly a major contribution to action research quite often restricted to a specific organization, with little or no contact with the larger social context. In other words, it is not enough that the organization works well and is profitable; it is necessary that each organization and each person in a given territory can develop within a healthy social and economic environment. Patrícia Wilson, sharing her experience in a community development projects in India helps to understand the idea of territorial development that is at the heart of the work of Mari Jose as manager and researcher at Orkestra: “Development is not just an economic issue. It is connected to one’s own being. It is connected to doing things collectively – sharing and caring. It is about the creation of a new society.” (Wilson, 2019, p. 135).

The table at the end of the chapter relating ARTD features with Ignatian leadership features illustrates how action research can be recreated in different institutional and social settings and with different epistemological backgrounds without losing its focus on cogenerating actionable knowledge embedded in the process of social and personal change. Mari Jose’s chapter is an invitation to look deeply into our own practice and challenges us to open our minds and hearts to learn with others. Thank you.

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## Post Experiencial 1

# Liderazgo, investigación acción y universidad

*Roberto Horta*<sup>1</sup>

### **Résumé**

#### *Leadership, recherche-action et université*

Comment mon style de leadership a-t-il influencé la recherche-action? Comment la recherche-action a-t-elle influencé mon style de leadership? Avec ces questions, Mari Jose Aranguren développe une réflexion très intéressante basée sur sa propre expérience. Ensuite, j'expose les impressions, les réactions et les points de vue qui se sont dégagés de la lecture des réflexions de Mari Jose, posant ces mêmes questions depuis que je suis dans une situation similaire, lorsque j'ai dirigé un institut de recherche à une université jésuite, pendant plus de dix ans, dans un pays d'Amérique latine, l'Uruguay.

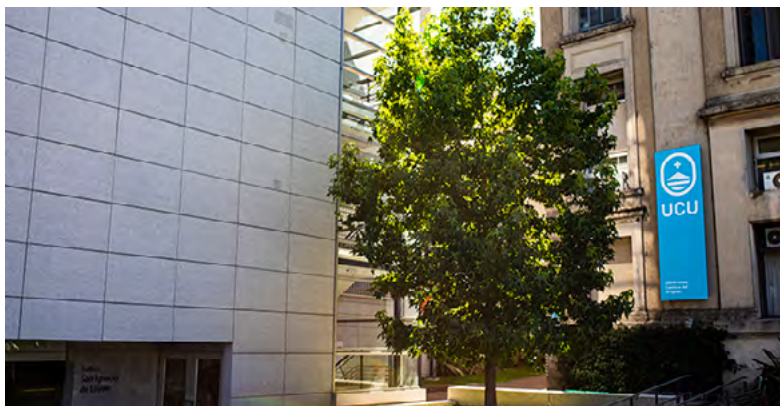
### **Resumo**

#### *Liderança, pesquisa-ação e universidade*

Como meu estilo de liderança influenciou a pesquisa-ação? Como a pesquisa-ação influenciou meu estilo de liderança? Com essas perguntas, Mari Jose Aranguren desenvolve uma reflexão muito interessante com base em sua própria experiência. A seguir, expus as impressões, reações e pontos de vista que surgiram quando li as reflexões de Mari Jose, me fazendo as mesmas perguntas, já que eu estava em situação semelhante, quando dirigi um instituto de pesquisa em uma universidade jésuita, por mais de dez anos, em um país da América Latina, Uruguai.

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El capítulo escrito por Mari Jose Aranguren reflexiona sobre el rol de gestionar instituciones que fomenten el desarrollo de la investigación acción y, en particular, sobre una de las principales funciones de la gestión, el estilo de liderazgo. Y lo novedoso es que la autora incorpora en su reflexión una perspectiva diferente, la perspectiva de los directores de institutos de investigación en las universidades: en definitiva, su propia experiencia.

Su lectura me ha hecho reflexionar sobre cómo ha sido mi experiencia en este tema, dado que, durante once años, del 2007 al 2018, tuve la responsabilidad de dirigir el Instituto de Competitividad de la Universidad Católica del Uruguay. Un Instituto con una estructura mucho más pequeña que la de Orkestra, integrado en la universidad y con menos autonomía presupuestal, pero con un objetivo similar y muy claro, realizar investigación aplicada que busque tener impacto en los procesos de desarrollo competitivo del país y su territorio y, en definitiva, en el bienestar de las personas.

Por otra parte, me ha parecido muy interesante, motivador y cercano, que las reflexiones de Mari Jose sobre su estilo de liderazgo, las haya hecho a partir de un marco conceptual muy específico, el liderazgo ignaciano, inspirado en la vida y la experiencia de Ignacio de Loyola. Me he sentido muy identificado, pues gran parte de mi educación fue realizada en colegios jesuitas y desde hace treinta años desarrollo mi actividad académica en una universidad jesuita.

Por lo tanto, el artículo de Mari Jose, aporta desde una doble perspectiva: por un lado, la importancia del líder de un instituto de investigación que busca desarrollar entornos que faciliten y promuevan la investigación acción y, por otro, la motivación que proviene de un estilo de liderazgo basado en la aspiración a cambiar, el servicio, la colaboración y la preocupación por el otro.

Mirando en retrospectiva mi larga actividad de gestión académica en la Universidad Católica, primero como decano de la Facultad de Ciencias Empresariales y luego como director del Instituto de Competitividad y otras áreas de investigación, en una universidad jesuita, encuentro grandes similitudes con la experiencia que expone Mari Jose en su artículo. Siempre he tenido como criterios que un líder en una organización académica debe aprender a priorizar y tomar decisiones, preocupándose por las personas, el equipo y la misión u objetivos que se ha fijado. Hay que tener confianza en los colaboradores, saber delegar y saber escuchar.

Desde el punto de vista de la investigación, me ha parecido clave la necesidad de formalizar, mantener y profundizar redes académicas que posibiliten, con una estructura reducida

y un modo de gestión propio, potencializar las bases de conocimiento que permitan cumplir la misión de realizar una investigación aplicada con impacto en el desarrollo competitivo del país. En ese sentido, fuimos impulsores de una amplia red de intercambios académicos con investigadores y centros relacionados con las temáticas de la competitividad y la innovación, a nivel regional e internacional. Como aprendizaje de dicha experiencia surge la importancia de lograr una mezcla de personas locales, que conocen muy bien el contexto en el que se ubican para poder trabajar en retos de desarrollo de su contexto, e internacionales, que traen experiencias, metodologías y conocimientos nuevos en los temas objeto de los proyectos en el territorio.

Finalmente, debo mencionar que la universidad en su conjunto tiene el gran desafío de equilibrar el objetivo de generación de nuevo conocimiento con el de incidir en la estrategia de su territorio, aspecto muchas veces discutido a nivel de la academia, a la cual, como recuerda Mari Jose, cada vez más se le pide que juegue un papel activo en los procesos de desarrollo económico.



## Capítulo 2

# Conectar la universidad y el territorio en Tierra del Fuego: propuesta de un marco analítico para el desarrollo de nuevos entornos de IADT en contextos universitarios

*Silvina Romano*<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

*The connection of university and the territory in Tierra del Fuego: proposal of an analytical framework for the development of new ARTD environments in universities*

This chapter presents the main features of the process of incorporating Action Research for Territorial Development (ARTD) in the National University of Tierra del Fuego (UNTDF), a recently created university which is in the search for models and ways of linking to the territory. This is a process that reaches not only research, but also the educational processes of different degrees. The conceptual framework for the chapter first discusses Territorial Development (TD) and then, the role of the university in TD.

The possibility of integrating ARTD in the UNTDF was the result of a slow process that began with the doctoral thesis which I developed in collaboration with many of the authors of this book. At the end of the doctoral process I carried out different initiatives to think about the incorporation of ARTD in the UNTDF. The main objective of this incorporation was to transform the vision of research and the teaching role in our university. In this chapter I share some central features of this process, which has not been linear, by presenting different edges and points of view, pauses and continuities. I share how I started the process with high expectations, which on a daily basis were modified to the point of thinking about abandoning the process. Over time, and in the face of the need to manage projects with both governmental and private sector actors, the process revived, and we were able to think about ARTD as part of the UNTDF. For this, it was necessary to review my role and think in first-person of my experience as a facilitator of the process, collaborating with different colleagues in their own transformation. I present the challenges that action researchers can face in their effort to transform the university to be an actor of territorial development. At the end

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of the chapter I present how the transformation of research can also generate changes in the teaching role. In my case it led me to profound transformations of the classroom space, starting with the management of the program, and continuing with the logic of the classes and the link with students, inside and outside the classroom.

### **Resumen**

#### ***Conectar la universidad y el territorio en Tierra del Fuego: propuesta de un marco analítico para el desarrollo de nuevos entornos de IADT en contextos universitarios***

El presente capítulo presenta elementos destacados del proceso de incorporación de la Investigación Acción para el Desarrollo Territorial (IADT) en la Universidad Nacional de Tierra del Fuego (UNTDF), de reciente creación, la cual se encuentra en la búsqueda de modelos y formas de vincularse al territorio, donde el proceso alcanza no solo la investigación sino también los procesos formativos de grado. El marco conceptual parte del Desarrollo Territorial (DT) y el rol de la universidad en dicho marco.

La posibilidad de pensar en IADT en la UNTDF fue un proceso lento que comienza con mi proceso de doctorado, el cual desarrollé en colaboración con mucho de los autores con los que compartimos este libro. Sobre el final del proceso de doctorado fui llevando adelante distintas iniciativas para poder pensar la incorporación de IADT en la UNTDF. El principal objetivo de dicha incorporación fue generar transformaciones en la visión de la investigación y en el rol docente. En este capítulo se recuperan algunos elementos centrales del proceso, el cual no ha sido lineal, presentando distintas aristas y puntos de vistas, pausas y continuidades. Comparto como inicie el proceso con expectativas altas, que en el día a día fueron modificándose al punto de pensar en abandonar el proceso. Con el tiempo y frente a la necesidad de gestionar proyectos con actores tanto gubernamentales como del sector privado, reviví poder pensar en IADT en la UNTDF. Para ello, fue necesario revisar mi rol y pensar en primera persona mi experiencia como facilitadora del proceso, colaborando con distintos colegas en su proceso de cambio. Presento los desafíos a los que pueden enfrentarse los investigadores en acción en su esfuerzo por transformar la universidad para que sea un actor de desarrollo territorial. Sobre el final del capítulo presento como la transformación del proceso de investigación puede generar cambios también en el rol docente, en mi caso me llevó a profundas transformaciones del espacio áulico, tanto desde la gestión del programa, como de la lógica de las clases y del vínculo con los estudiantes, dentro y fuera del espacio áulico.

# Conectar la universidad y el territorio en Tierra del Fuego: propuesta de un marco analítico para el desarrollo de nuevos entornos de IADT en contextos universitarios

## Introducción

Este capítulo busca sistematizar y presentar las transformaciones que se iniciaron en la Universidad Nacional de Tierra del Fuego (UNTDF) tanto desde la docencia como desde la investigación, gracias a la incorporación Investigación Acción para el Desarrollo Territorial (IADT) en distintos grupos de trabajos. En algunos casos dicha incorporación se realizó en forma explícita, en otros, se explicitó luego de identificar elementos del enfoque que se realizaban intuitivamente.

El capítulo se basa en mi propia experiencia, luego de realizar la tesis de doctorado en la Universidad de Deusto, San Sebastián, España (entre 2014 y 2017) en temas vinculados al rol de la universidad en el territorio en forma conjunta con la investigación acción (IA), en Orkestra-Instituto Vasco de Competitividad (Universidad de Deusto). El enfoque IADT se encontraba en proceso de consolidación en dicha institución al momento de realizar la tesis. El trabajo en el proceso doctoral me permitió generar profundos cambios en mi visión de la investigación, que una vez identificados, generaron nuevos desafíos en una segunda etapa de transformaciones, las cuales entiendo como la preparación de las condiciones para que este enfoque pueda discutirse en la Universidad Nacional de Tierra del Fuego, desde una situación embrionaria, porque poco se hablaba de la IA.

El trabajar con IADT me permitió, gracias a su modelo co-generativo, entender las voces de los actores como elemento clave para la investigación en los procesos territoriales. Es decir, entender la posibilidad de generar espacios de confianza (no exentos de conflictos) donde la voz de los actores locales puede resultar un elemento transformador. Si bien dicho modelo se plantea para proyectos de investigación, en el contexto y la dinámica de la UNTDF se puso en evidencia la transformación necesaria no solo en la investigación, sino también la docencia. El papel de la docencia en IADT, hasta ese momento, no se estaba desarrollado en Orkestra, sino en Rafaela, Argentina y en Agder, Noruega.

Por lo tanto, este capítulo hace una contribución a IADT en relación con su conexión con la docencia. Lo hace complementando los trabajos presentados en este mismo libro por James Karlsen y Pablo Costamagna. Por otra parte, las reflexiones sobre el proceso de formación en IA se conectan con el capítulo escrito por Amaia Zumeaga y Mikel Zurbano.

El capítulo comparte cómo IADT lentamente está permitiendo un proceso de transformación de la enseñanza y la investigación. La discusión se centra en los desafíos que enfrentan los investigadores en acción en su esfuerzo por transformar la universidad para que sea un actor de desarrollo territorial. Siguiendo el planteo de Larrea, (2018) el proceso de transformación interna de la institución universitaria requiere la generación de ecosistemas que permitan y validen la IA, siendo el caso de la UNTDF particular puesto que al ser una universidad nueva (se detalla más abajo) que discute su rol y misión territorial, se presentan espacios de discusión institucional que permiten plantar esta alternativa.

Los dos ejes, investigación y formación, están vinculados, pero los procesos fueron en distintas líneas. En cuanto a la investigación, en el inicio de este proceso me pensaba como facilitadora con proyectos desde la universidad y con actores del territorio. Con el tiempo fui cambiando el rol para pensarme no solo como facilitadora hacia el territorio, sino en mi propia institución, trabajando con colegas y estudiantes para que podamos vernos como investigadores en la acción, como agentes de cambio.

Por otro lado, en la formación, al realizar el doctorado (al decir doctorado incluyo todo lo que el proceso implica: cursos y seminarios, discusión con colegas, con la directora, con otros investigadores, entrevista, charlas de café, etc.) pude entender el potencial de transformar mi formación de economista, y la contradicción que puede surgir de esta formación tradicional —neutralidad vs objetividad— como una oportunidad de transformación del territorio, de los estudiantes, y mía. Parte de esa experiencia se recupera en este capítulo.

El capítulo parte de los resultados presentados en la tesis mencionada (Romano, 2017) y propone avanzar en una reflexión sobre cómo el proceso que allí se describía en su concepción, ha evolucionado. En base a lo expuesto, el trabajo será guiado por dos preguntas: *¿Cuáles fueron los cambios en mi propio rol respecto a los procesos que se enfocan en IADT?*, la respuesta a esta pregunta emerge de mi propia experiencia. Por otro lado, vinculado a la formación académica de grado: *¿Puede ser el espacio áulico de la formación de economistas un espacio que facilite la transformación?*

## Marco conceptual

Existen diversos enfoques y conceptos para analizar el rol de la universidad en el territorio. Se parte en este trabajo de las ideas presentadas en torno al Desarrollo Territorial (DT) como fenómeno complejo y endógeno (Madoery, 2016) que requiere de reflexiones en cada territorio para determinar cuál es el trayecto posible. A pesar de la diversidad de conceptos, no existe una definición única ni generalizable, el DT requiere que cada territorio defina cuáles son los objetivos y los medios para encontrar una trayectoria de desarrollo, de modo que cada comunidad o grupo social defina, de acuerdo con sus valores y prioridades, las distintas categorías u objetivos (Romano, 2017; Karsen y Larrea 2014).

El DT requiere coordinación multinivel, desde lo local a lo nacional, en el sistema territorial (Rofman, 1989). En el espacio multinivel existen diversos intereses e instituciones. En este contexto la universidad es considerada como actor del territorio en un doble rol, por una parte, local y regional, por otra, se inserta en el sistema nacional, en su rol de investigación, formación y extensión<sup>2</sup>. Vale la pena destacar que en Argentina la extensión es una de las actividades presentes no solo en la reglamentación, sino en la asignación de tareas de cada uno de los docentes investigadores en universidades nacionales. Esto hace necesario poder pensar la interacción entre las tres funciones a fin de entender los aportes de la universidad como actor territorial (Romano, 2017). La extensión es entendida como la forma que tiene la universidad de acercarse a los grupos sociales, considerando que no necesariamente se ven alcanzados por las otras formas —investigación y formación— (Tünnermann, 2008). Otras aproximaciones entienden al tercer rol como la forma de acercar la universidad a los problemas de la sociedad (Gunasekara, 2006), o ven el vínculo universidad-industria como una forma de transferir conocimiento (Arocena y Sutz 2000).

Mas allá de la definición, Arocena y Sutz (2000) plantean la universidad emprendedora, donde se destaca la búsqueda de modelos de investigación y formación para poder realizar aportes al territorio. En dicha búsqueda se resalta la importancia de plantear agendas de investigación que pongan en valor los distintos saberes del territorio y que generen capacidades (tanto en la universidad como en el territorio) para lograr modelos flexibles. Por ejemplo, invitar a las clases de grado a distintos actores políticos que hayan colaborado en proyec-

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<sup>2</sup> En Argentina, las universidades nacionales encuentran definida sus misiones sustantivas —Investigación, formación y extensión— por la Ley de educación Superior Ley N.º 24.521 promulgada el 7 de agosto de 1995 publicada en el Boletín oficial 2820



tos permite ampliar la comprensión de los temas conceptuales en los procesos formativos. Dicha búsqueda requiere entender la posibilidad de pensar la universidad como institución transformadora (Aranguren *et al.*, 2016). En este punto, entiendo que la transformación comienza con los cambios en la propia institución, lo que requiere repensarse y generar espacios de reflexión interna. En el caso de una universidad nueva como la UNTDF es más fácil generar estos espacios de discusión respecto al rol que se pretende cumplir.

Este marco conceptual me permite pensar y discutir cuales son las formas, las estrategias de llevar adelante, desde la universidad, una investigación que permita transformar el territorio. En mi trabajo de doctorado (Romano 2017) he planteado que la IA puede ayudar a conectar la universidad con las necesidades del territorio, así como la relevancia del espacio áulico como espacio de transformación. En este capítulo la reflexión versa, por un lado, en torno a cómo se puede poner en valor la IA con colegas que no conocen su potencial y, por otro, en torno a mi experiencia en el aula en la generación de pensamiento crítico.

## Construyendo IADT en la UNTD

### *El contexto de la UNTDF*

En noviembre de 2009 el Congreso Nacional sanciona la Ley 26559<sup>3</sup>, la cual crea la Universidad Nacional de Tierra del Fuego (UNTDF), con cobertura de todo el territorio provincial, sobre las bases de la transformación de sede de otra universidad (UNPSJB) que operaba en la provincia, en la ciudad de Ushuaia. Desde 1985 tiene como principal misión vincularse con el territorio a través de sus misiones sustantivas: docencia, investigación y extensión (Romano, 2017). La nueva universidad se organizó por institutos (creando cuatro) y cada uno de ellos instituye carreras de grado y agendas de investigación, articulando con el resto de los institutos y las unidades académicas. Esta forma de organización pretende fomentar el trabajo interdisciplinario, así como el abordaje desde múltiples saberes<sup>4</sup>. El Instituto de Desarrollo Económico e Innovación (IDEI) —del cual formo parte—, tiene entre sus objetivos promover el desarrollo económico del territorio. Sus líneas de investigación invitan a los equipos a trabajar en forma colaborativa con los actores del territorio. En esta línea y con el intento de realizar trabajo colaborativo surgen preguntas vinculadas al «cómo» en diferentes equipos de trabajo. Mi propuesta en dicha discusión fue compartir algunas ideas centrales de IADT para proponerla como opción.

### ***Etapa inicial: construcción de las condiciones y las voluntades: ¿Cómo se incorpora IADT en UNTDF? ¿Están dadas las condiciones?***

Entre los resultados del trabajo de mi tesis, presenté cómo IADT se podía vislumbrar en la UNTDF como una estrategia de investigación que podía convertirse en una de las formas de incidir en la transformación del territorio. La definición del potencial de la IA en el instituto la llevamos adelante en forma colectiva docentes investigadores del IDEI en diversos talleres internos. En los mismos, a partir de ideas disparadoras en relación con la interacción universidad y territorio, fuimos discutiendo potencialidades y limitaciones. El primer grupo de docen-

<sup>3</sup> Sancionada el 18 de noviembre de 2009 publicada el 21 de diciembre de 2009 en el boletín oficial N.º 31.805

<sup>4</sup> La mayoría de las universidades nacionales en Argentina se organizan por facultades, al organizarse por institutos se busca generar mayor interacción entre los equipos docentes y de investigación (en Romano 2017 se detalla la estructura y objetivos de cada área en la UNTDF)

tes estaba compuesto por representantes de las carreras de Lic. en Turismo, Lic. en economía y Lic. En Gestión Empresarial.

Durante julio de 2016 y mayo de 2017 propuse una serie de talleres internos sobre la visión de la investigación y la docencia, con la expectativa de que a través de este proceso los involucrados pudieran generar un cambio e incorporar IADT en su actividad. Para la mayoría de los invitados al proceso era la primera vez que escuchaban hablar de este tipo de investigación. El interés y los acuerdos alcanzados en los primeros talleres me generaron expectativas sobre el potencial del proceso, pero luego no pudimos llevar adelante proyectos basados en los principios IADT y este primer impulso quedó en el marco de la expresión de deseo. La interrupción del trabajo en IADT por un año aproximadamente, fue una decisión conversada con el director del Instituto, a fin de dar tiempo para madurar el proceso. Siguiendo las reflexiones de Reason y Bradbury (2001), que indican que no se puede imponer ni pretender «evangelizar» a los interesados, la incorporación de la IA a la universidad debe ser un proceso democrático. Entendí así (con un poco de frustración), que era necesario tomar distancia y esperar que pasara «algo» que permitiera retomar el proceso. Algo entre comillas, porque no sabía qué podía ser. Sin embargo, era consciente de que no estaban las condiciones o las voluntades todavía para que el proceso emergiera por sí solo.

Luego de dicho trabajo, en el corto plazo no se pudo llevar adelante ningún proyecto utilizando IADT. La primera interpretación que realicé fue que no estaban dadas las condiciones, que faltaba que mis compañeros conocieran más de qué se trataba. Entendí que el proceso necesitaba tiempo, y que yo no podía insistir en que se adoptara otra estrategia de investigación (a la tradicional) en forma instantánea. A mí me llevo al menos tres años de reflexiones y lecturas entender de qué trata la IA. Entendí que no podía pretender que, por un relato mío o por una serie de talleres en los que participaron mis colegas, adoptaran una nueva visión de la investigación. Una serie de charlas que tuve con el entonces director del instituto me ayudaron a entender la situación: «Creo que hay que tener paciencia y esperar un poquito, que son cosas que llevan tiempo y tienen que estar dadas las condiciones. El apoyo mío está, pero hay que esperar a que a cada uno le interese» (correspondencia personal con el director del instituto en 2017).

### ***Segunda etapa: cultivar lo factible***

Dejé por un tiempo de hablar de IA en la UNTDF. Sin embargo, después de un tiempo, en charlas informarles con dos colegas en el café de la universidad, me contaron la dificultad que tenían para llevar adelante, entre otros aspectos, procesos co-generativos en un proyecto en marcha. Sugerí las lecturas *Desarrollo territorial e investigación acción. Innovación a través del diálogo* (Karlsen y Larrea, 2015) y *Actores facilitadores del desarrollo territorial: una aproximación desde la construcción social* (Costamagna y Larrea 2018). A partir de ello, logré revivir el interés por IADT en personas que no estuvieron involucradas en los talleres iniciales.

Las mismas colegas me invitaron a participar en el proyecto «WAIA<sup>5</sup> – Camina la historia» que llevaban adelante. El principal objetivo del proyecto es, a través del uso de tecnología, poner en valor la historia de la ciudad de Ushuaia en un recorrido de puntos de interés en la ciudad. El proyecto está liderado por la UNTDF y cuenta con la participación del gobierno provincial, municipal e instituciones de Ushuaia, cada institución con un saber fundamental para el proyecto (Carmona, Mella, Romano, 2019). Al no tener herramientas para gestionar las relaciones interinstitucionales, así como elementos para facilitar la cogeneración

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<sup>5</sup> Vocablo Yámana «Ciudad que mira a la bahía»

de conocimiento<sup>6</sup>, las coordinadoras propusieron la necesidad de un cambio en la forma de gestionar el proyecto. Así fueron incorporando en el proyecto espacios de reflexiones personales y grupales, la segunda parte del proyecto fue escrito y pensando en términos de IADT.

Una de las coordinadoras, luego de un tiempo de trabajar con el enfoque, reflexiona:

Desde la gestión del proyecto teníamos en cuenta ciertos elementos que hacen al avance del proyecto a niveles técnicos y de producción/producto final. Pero nunca se me había ocurrido incorporar otros elementos, que «humanizan» el proceso y nos permiten entender qué pasa a niveles «no técnicos». Entender los obstáculos como tales y la importancia de explicitar los conflictos nos permitió regular los tiempos en función a los actores y sus roles, entendiendo quiénes eran parte del grupo chico y quiénes del grupo grande. Sin duda nos queda mucho por aprender. Pero nos llevamos puesta una herramienta para la vida (Correspondencia personal).

### **Aprendizajes del caso: la relevancia de facilitar la transformación dentro de la universidad para poder desarrollar IADT con otros actores territoriales**

Lo presentando en los apartados anteriores me permite presentar las reflexiones en torno a la primera pregunta que pretendía abordar en este trabajo: ¿Cuáles fueron los cambios en mi propio rol respecto a los procesos que se enfocan en IADT?

Una de las reflexiones en este proceso es el rol de facilitación que he jugado y entender cuáles fueron los cambios en mi propio rol respecto a los procesos que se enfocan en IADT. Entiendo a la facilitadora como la investigadora que forma parte del proceso, colabora en la concreción de objetivos, a la vez que genera información académica (Larrea y Costamagna 2018).

En Romano (2019) presenté los elementos centrales del proceso de cambio que fui dando en el trascurso de mi doctorado, proceso que fue necesario transitar para poder incorporar la IA no solo en mi tesis, sino en mi práctica académica en general. El trabajo se titula *Slaying my own ghosts* (matando mis propios fantasmas) haciendo referencia a los cambios personales que fui dando para entender y adaptar la IA como estrategia. Estos cambios fueron: reconocer que existen distintas formas de generar conocimiento; que el proceso de construcción de conocimiento depende del investigador, de la reflexión, acción y reinterpretación de los fenómenos; que el contexto importa; que el investigador puede alterar el proceso (y eso es bueno) y que la IA produce conocimiento académico. Estos cambios me permitieron dar los primeros pasos para pensar la investigación desde otro lugar, tanto en relación con la forma de hacer investigación, como el método y el objetivo. Fueron el inicio de transformaciones que todavía continúan.

Al mencionar estos cambios aquí, pretendo dar cuenta de cuán importante es la formación en la carrera universitaria que no solo son conocimientos, sino que forman y estructuran a los profesionales en criterios de investigación. Si estos criterios no son flexibles o reflexivos, pueden generar huellas difíciles de romper. Por ejemplo, en la licenciatura en economía, los contenidos mínimos solo presentan elementos del análisis económico tradicional, dejando muy poco espacio desde lo curricular para el pensamiento crítico. Mi formación reglada se estableció en un solo paradigma.

<sup>6</sup> En Carmona *et al.* 2019 se detalla el proceso, los conflictos que emergen del mismo y las diferentes formas de superarlos.

Al responder a esta primera pregunta de investigación planteo los elementos centrales que me ayudaron en la transformación en esta nueva etapa. Si las anteriores rupturas supusieron un cambio en mi manera de concebir la investigación, éstas están orientadas a transformar mi práctica de la docencia y la investigación:

**a) *Tomar distancia del proceso para respetar los tiempos de cada uno***

La generación de espacios de IADT en la UNTDF continúa un proceso de cambios en términos personales y solo a través de entender estos cambios es posible comprender o ayudar en los procesos de cambios de otros. Por ejemplo, reconocer el tiempo que me llevó realizar los cambios (luego de superadas las dificultades parece instantáneo) me permite entender los tiempos de las demás personas que pueden estar haciendo un proceso similar. En este sentido, es importante poder tomar distancia del proceso en algún punto de la facilitación, para darle tiempo a las demás personas de poder entender sus propios cambios y permitir que cada uno de los involucrados pueda tener su lugar de reflexión sobre la propia práctica. Es decir, reconocer los tiempos personales y grupales como forma de facilitación consolida en el largo plazo las iniciativas (aunque en principio parezcan fracasos o empantanamiento de los proyectos). Esto se ve en proyectos de mediano/largo plazo, que requieren la adecuación de distintos tiempos (personales, administrativos).

**b) *No facilitar en solitario, sino generar espacios colaborativos y reflexivos con otros colegas***

Los cambios en mi propio rol como docente investigadora me permitieron entender la capacidad de cambio que puedo tener desde mi lugar de docente investigadora, tanto en el espacio formativo como en los proyectos y temas de investigación. Sin embargo, también puso en evidencia que el proceso no puede ser facilitado por una sola persona y que es necesario generar procesos de facilitación al interior de la universidad. No alcanza con hacer un taller o contar experiencias, sino que hay que colaborar con el resto de los colegas para que puedan entender el potencial de la IA en nuestro rol territorial. La discusión de qué tipo de investigación hacemos, cómo nos vinculamos, cómo generamos interacción entre la investigación y la docencia, son preguntas recurrentes en mi instituto. En la vorágine del día al día es difícil abordarlas, la carencia de espacio para realizar un ejercicio reflexivo al interior de la institución no nos permite posicionar a la universidad como agente de cambio. El planteo en el marco conceptual de la posibilidad de una universidad emprendedora o transformadora requiere del ejercicio reflexivo que, en particular en el IDEI, se aborda en reflexiones de quipos de investigación pequeños, no en forma integral en el instituto.

De forma no explícita, fui tomando con algunos colegas el rol de facilitadora interna, en tanto la generación de espacios para reflexión sobre preocupaciones comunes. Esto resultó en un proceso de reflexión interno, que respondía a la necesidad para generar capacidades internas con vistas a la interacción con actores fuera de la universidad. Fue un lugar difícil de asumir para mí, porque implicó tiempo que no se encuentra detallado en mi plan de tareas, a la vez que la validación no fue institucional sino por pares.

**c) *Prepararme para la discusión epistemológica***

Este rol implícito de facilitadora interna requirió adquirir más herramientas en torno a la epistemología y a paradigmas científicos, puesto que son elementos que, implícita o explíci-

tamente, surgen a la hora de hablar de IA. Con esto quiero decir que hablar de IADT en instituciones donde aún no se encuentra validada, o donde no se conocen elementos fundamentales, conlleva conocer con mayor profundidad distintas posturas en cuanto a paradigmas científicos. Frente a estas inquietudes que me fueron surgiendo, me sumé a un grupo de trabajo que reflexiona sobre la generación de saberes interdisciplinarios y la generación de conocimiento desde distintas perspectivas.

#### d) *Integrar la escritura en primera persona como hábito*

Por otro lado, poder escribir en primera persona en procesos reflexivos sobre la práctica es una forma de entenderse como parte del problema. Luego de publicar *Slaying my own ghosts* recibí muchos comentarios (positivos y negativos) sobre el título, a muchos colegas le llamo la atención el relato en primera persona. A pesar de cierta incomodidad que sentí frente al cuestionamiento de la primera persona, el intentar facilitar un espacio de IA en la UNTDF reforzó para mí la importancia de visibilizar quién relata, en qué contexto y por qué. Todo ello puede tener una capacidad explicativa muy importante para el lector.

#### e) *Entender la diversidad entre los docentes e investigadores*

Por último, en cuanto a la facilitación interna, teniendo en cuenta que muchos de los docentes investigadores de la UNTDF se encuentran buscando *su* camino en la investigación, distingo dos perfiles:

- Aquellos que tienen trayectoria en investigación del tipo «tradicional»: Muestran mayor reticencia a adoptar IADT. Tienen la necesidad de cambiar los supuestos epistemológicos y ontológicos para poder integrar la IA junto con la visión tradicional de la investigación. Esto se asocia a un cambio personal en términos del posicionamiento del investigador, lo que hace más difícil la adopción de la IA en proyectos de investigación.
- Noveles en investigación: Se sienten más cómodos y con menos resistencia, desde la curiosidad. Estas personas, que no poseen trayectoria en investigación, pero si las tienen en la gestión de proyectos de extensión, han entendido el potencial de IADT, tanto en el trabajo con actores, como en la generación de conocimiento académico (previamente solo quedaba en gestión de proyectos).

Lo anterior se pone en evidencia en el siguiente fragmento:

No puedo creer, esto que nos decís [IADT] es lo que hacíamos intuitivamente, nunca pensé que podíamos hacer investigación con este proyecto, siempre pensé que eran cosas separadas. Qué gran descubrimiento, poder trabajar con el proyecto y poder hacer la reflexión con la teoría, siempre pensé que la investigación y las publicaciones no eran para mí (Fragmento de correspondencia personal investigadora UNTDF 2019).

### **Discusión de los procesos formativos: ¿Se puede incorporar la visión transformadora en la formación de economistas en la UNTDF?**

Las transformaciones descritas en el apartado anterior han generado el contexto para que en ciertos espacios de la UNTDF se adopte IADT vaya ganando fuerza. La pregunta de investigación que abordo a continuación es mi contribución central en este capítulo. Sin embargo, compartirlo sin haber compartido las dificultades y los avances (pequeños y grandes) del apartado

anterior, hubiera significado replicar algo que yo misma he criticado en la sección anterior: interpretar el desarrollo de IADT de forma simplificada como algo que se puede, sin más, implementar de una vez. La integración de la IA en la actividad universitaria requiere de un esfuerzo sostenido por generar ciertas condiciones básicas. Una vez generadas estas, experiencias como la que presento en este apartado pueden fortalecerse. Por ello, es importante entender la experiencia que a continuación comparto, en el marco de las condiciones descritas anteriormente.

En esta sección, a través de la presentación del caso de una materia, busco responder a la pregunta de investigación: *¿Puede ser el espacio áulico de la formación de economistas un espacio que facilite la transformación?* Como resultado de la discusión, planteo un marco analítico sobre este tipo de transformación.

Levin y Greenwood (2008) se preguntan cómo superar la idea dominante de presentar a la formación como un proceso del tipo fabril en el que el estudiante ingresa a la universidad a aprender un cúmulo de conocimiento sin espacio para la reflexión crítica. Se refieren a este tipo de planteo como la visión neoliberal del conocimiento, e indican que la IA en la universidad puede ser una forma de cambiar dicha visión, dado que pretende entender la complejidad de los procesos sociales en forma holística, alejándose de la pretensión de homogeneidad de los procesos. Tomo, como punto de partida, esta reflexión que invita a pensar el proceso universitario de grado no como una fábrica de transmitir conocimiento, sino como fuente de pensamiento crítico.

La materia Economía de los Recursos Naturales y Ambiente, es una materia optativa del cuarto año de los economistas que tiene como objetivo general: «brindar un panorama general de las diversas perspectivas y análisis económicos vinculados al uso de los recursos naturales, partiendo de ese análisis incorporar diversas corrientes del pensamiento heterodoxo que intentan dar respuestas a la problemática de la sustentabilidad, así como comprender al ambiente como fuente agotable de bienes y recursos naturales imprescindibles para el funcionamiento regular de la economía». En esta materia se pretende generar un espacio donde el docente investigador se convierte en un facilitador en el aula y los estudiantes en coinvestigadores de su propio proceso. Se abordan, además de los conceptos teóricos generales que requiere la disciplina, problemáticas territoriales a través de la presentación de casos y experiencias. En efecto, esta propuesta pedagógica es una forma de IADT, ya que pone en valor, por una parte, la experimentación de los estudiantes y, por otra, la reflexión del docente como facilitador del proceso y como investigador (de sí mismo y del proceso). Esta metodología de trabajo fue discutida con el coordinador de la carrera quien acompañó la decisión de plantear esta nueva lógica en el aula (antes de dictar las materias los programas curriculares pasan por un proceso de evaluación tanto desde la coordinación de la carrera como de los responsables académicos de la universidad).

Uno de los ejes de la materia es contraponer economía de los recursos naturales (de corte neoclásico) con otras aproximaciones como bioeconomía (Carpintero, 2006), economía ecológica (Martínez-alier, 2011) y buen vivir (Gudynas 2011). Así se busca problematizar cada uno de los enfoques. A tal fin, no se realizan las tradicionales clases magistrales —el docente exponiendo y los estudiantes escuchando— sino que se busca generar dinámicas de apropiación de los estudiantes a partir de presentaciones críticas que realizan ellos, otras personas invitadas a dar charlas o a través de entrevistas, o bien presentaciones de docentes que pretenden generar discusiones.

En los primeros encuentros se evidencia la incomodidad de los estudiantes, al salir de la lógica del docente en la posición del saber y de ellos como receptores de ese saber (Freire, 1970). Por ejemplo, he visto y he experimentado cuestionamientos de los participantes en distintas manifestaciones al finalizar la clase del tipo: «¿cómo? esta crítica significa que todo lo que vimos hasta ahora en la carrera no tiene sentido?» Cuando les invitaba a que pensarán qué les gustaría leer en relación con la temática del curso, algunas de las respuestas fue-

ron: «¿para qué está la bibliografía en el programa?» (Registrado en el diario docente). Finalmente, una de las respuestas que más me hizo pensar en la práctica que tenemos como decentes fue la siguiente: «Usted profe, nos tiene que decir qué leer, ¡cómo vamos a proponer nosotros!» (Registrado en el diario docente).

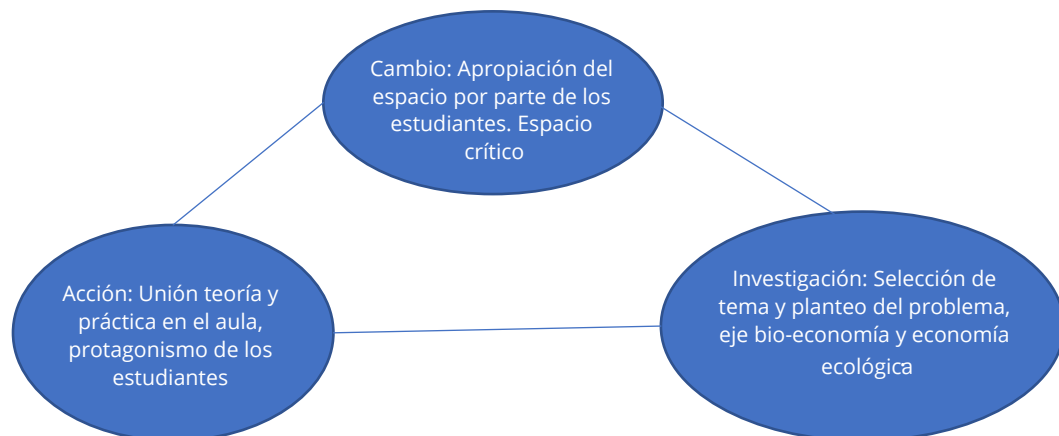
En la práctica, lleva varios encuentros cambiar las dinámicas aprendidas. De esta manera, se busca problematizar en el aula realidades naturalizadas. Conecto, en esta reflexión, con la problemática planteada por James Karlsen en su capítulo de este libro, en que comparte sus dificultades para que los estudiantes dejen de percibirse como testigos del DT para asumirse como actores.

La educación reglada requiere realizar evaluaciones con nota, a fin de dar cuenta que los estudiantes superan la instancia de evaluación y tener un registro del aprendizaje. En esta materia se opta por un trabajo final escrito donde, si bien existe una consigna general, no se determina el tema; es decir los estudiantes eligen el tema vinculado a lo presentado en la materia a lo largo del cuatrimestre, y deben realizar un ensayo. Dicho trabajo requiere no solo el desarrollo de conceptos e ideas, sino que los estudiantes puedan poner en discusión los contenidos teóricos, así como también expresar su opinión justificada en lo desarrollado en el trabajo. Esta es una de las formas de respetar los reglamentos y los requisitos formales, pero también invitar a los estudiantes a realizar reflexiones en temas de su propio interés. Al ser una materia que enfoca sus contenidos en pensamiento heterodoxo, invita a criticar también la formación tradicional (que los estudiantes tienen en otras materias). Se presenta a continuación reflexión de una estudiante al respecto:

La cursada de la materia fue muy buena. No me costó posicionarme desde otros enfoques; de hecho, tiene bastante más sentido para mí, pero también tienen la dificultad de la aplicación en relación con políticas que transformen la realidad en la que vivimos. El enfoque me parece muy útil para que la crítica al enfoque más aceptado incorpore muchas más dimensiones y que sea más «integral», por así decirlo, como así también para repensar conceptos y la forma de generar conocimiento. Me gustó la idea de elegir un tema para trabajar y elaborarlo a partir de varias perspectivas (Reflexión de cierre estudiante primer cuatrimestre 2018).

A continuación, presento un esquema analítico que surge de la experiencia de la materia en vinculación con a la IA:

**Figura 1. Marco analítico IADT en el aula en la UNTDF**



Fuente: Elaboración propia.

En el esquema se presentan los tres ejes de la formación: (i) **Cambio** de la lógica en el espacio áulico que busca favorecer el pensamiento crítico, y la apropiación de los estudiantes de los temas y del programa (donde son invitados a proponer temas de su interés); (ii) **Acción**, donde se busca constantemente la interacción entre la teoría y la práctica, en forma de presentación de los temas, en el trabajo con invitados y la presentación de caso, así como en las producciones que surgen de los estudiantes en el marco de la materia y la salidas de campo; (iii) **Investigación**, en que los temas que se presentan en el aula son producto de proyectos de investigación en el que participan distintos docentes investigadores de la UNTDF, lo que permite constantemente vincular la formación y la investigación; por otro lado, el desarrollo del trabajo final de los estudiantes se enmarca en un pequeño ejercicio de planteo de problema de investigación, en el cual son acompañados por el equipo docente.

Este cambio en mi forma de ver el aula es una de las transformaciones más fuertes, entre muchas en los últimos años, en tanto mi rol de docente investigadora. Me genera un compromiso muy fuerte con los estudiantes, no solo desde los contenidos en la enseñanza de la economía, sino en la problematización y en acompañarlos en el proceso de animarse a criticar y a repensar el saber disciplinar desde otros lugares.

Entiendo que pensar en términos de IADT en el aula requiere un proceso de deconstrucción del docente y de los estudiantes. Como docente he realizado el proceso en los últimos cinco años, y el mismo ha estado acompañado por distintas personas (directora del doctorado, compañeros, docentes que he tenido). Ahora, en mi rol de docente facilitadora, siento el compromiso de acompañar a los estudiantes en el proceso de deconstrucción y construcción.

Acompaño esta idea con una nueva reflexión de los alumnos:

La materia es buenísima porque trata temas que te abren la cabeza [...] empezamos repasando los puntos débiles de la teoría económica y eso te hace buscar cuales serían los puntos que deberían corregirse. ¡Creo que no solo es útil, sino necesario! (Reflexión de cierre estudiante primer cuatrimestre 2018).

## Reflexiones finales

He presentado en este capítulo algunos de los elementos más relevantes del proceso de adopción de IADT en la UNTDF, el cual ha sido producto de la necesidad de distintos investigadores de facilitar procesos atravesados por conflictos, principalmente derivados de la participación de distintas instituciones. Uno de los elementos más importante fue encontrar el momento apropiado para que estuvieran dadas las condiciones, no se puede intentar vencer o forzar la adopción de nuevos métodos. El caso presentado al inicio del capítulo permite reflexionar sobre dichas condiciones. Mi principal conclusión en este ámbito es que en la UNTDF se vislumbra mayor posibilidad de inspiración en aquellos equipos con menos experiencia en investigación.

Por otro lado, pensar IADT no solo en la facilitación de procesos con actores del territorio, sino en relación con nuestro rol como actores internos, y como objetos de la IA ha sido relevante. Nos ha llevado a pensar el espacio de facilitación entre colegas, a encontrar instancias y lugares internos que nos permitan compartir con los colegas aprendizajes, dificultades, encuentros y desencuentros que vamos viviendo en cada uno de los proyectos que participamos.

Finalmente, en tanto proceso formativo, los espacios de IADT ayudan a pensar el aula como espacio facilitador, y seguir trabajando con los estudiantes en cambiar la lógica docente-estudiantes. Seguimos buscando formas que permitan la apropiación de conocimiento



desde los estudiantes a la vez que pongan en valor los aportes que los mismos puedan hacer en el aula y en el territorio. No es una tarea fácil, ni que termina cuando finaliza la clase, requiere un acompañamiento de los estudiantes a lo largo de la carrera, para que puedan encontrar su propia visión, y se animen a realizarla aún que el pensamiento dominante en la disciplina enseñe otra cosa.

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## Capítulo Corto 2

# Vislumbrando la universidad desde el territorio: La búsqueda de un aliado relevante

Alfredo Ortiz Aragón<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

*A glimpse of the university from a territorial lens: in search of a relevant ally*

This essay seeks to enter into dialogue with Silvina Romano's insights from her efforts to weave stronger connections between her university and territorial development processes in Tierra del Fuego, Argentina. My reflections centre on how we might reverse the separation between predominant forms of thinking and acting in academic spaces and research processes, and the ways people live, think and act in their everyday lives. While academic research may have some special needs and circumstances that distinguish it from other forms of knowledge generation, my essay asks if we might not have created artificial conditions that fail to generate value and simply distance ourselves from other territorial actors. I highlight that to become more relevant in territorial processes, universities would need to develop new understandings about their roles, a broad and open epistemic worldview, and a suite of methodological approaches that enable participatory engagement. This would take years to develop, but as Silvina alludes, we as professors can start the process by connecting our classrooms to the community and the territory, and vice versa. We can't afford to wait for the university as an institution to decide to act. As we seek to weave these connections, we can learn from existing participatory territorial development processes that have emerged in response to local and territorial needs —some of which have included university involvement. To enable this learning and these new connections we all need to reflect how we are within (and not outside) the territory, which can help us remove barriers that separate us artificially and prevent meaningful engagement.

### **Resumen**

*Vislumbrando la universidad desde el territorio: La búsqueda de un aliado relevante*

Con este ensayo busco dialogar con las experiencias y análisis presentados por Silvina Romano sobre sus esfuerzos para tejer lazos más fuertes entre la universidad y los actores y pro-

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cesos territoriales de Tierra del Fuego, Argentina. Mis reflexiones se centran en cómo revertir la separación que hay entre las formas predominantes de pensar y actuar en espacios académicos y procesos de investigación, y las formas en que la gente vive, piensa y actúa en sus vidas cotidianas. Si bien la producción académica puede requerir de algunos elementos que lo distinguen de otros modos de generación de conocimiento, mi ensayo pregunta si no hemos creado a veces condiciones que son artificiales, no generan valor y que simplemente nos alejan del resto de actores. Resalto que lograr que la universidad se vuelva un actor más relevante en procesos territoriales va a requerir nuevos entendimientos sobre sus roles, una visión epistémica del mundo muy amplia, y una gama de metodologías diversas para trabajar de una forma participativa. Esto tomaría años para desarrollar, pero como alude Silvina, puede empezar con cada profesor conectando su aula a la comunidad y territorio. Tejer estos lazos también puede beneficiarse de esfuerzos participativos exitosos existentes que han emergido desde procesos territoriales que comparte Silvina. Será clave reflexionar sobre cómo cada uno de nosotros somos parte de y no fuera del territorio, pues nos puede ayudar a remover barreras que nos separan artificialmente y previenen relaciones beneficiosas al territorio y su gente.

## Vislumbrando la universidad desde el territorio: La búsqueda de un aliado relevante

### **Incorporando las buenas prácticas de la vida normal a los procesos de investigación**

Empecé a escribir este ensayo corto desde la cima de una montañita en Christchurch, Nueva Zelanda, donde había llegado para una conferencia académica. Los paisajes son fantásticos, tanto que, al sentarme a empezar a escribir, me di cuenta de que no estaba mentalmente en onda académica, sino en un estado mental más cotidiano, o quizás turístico. Estando tan lejos de mi mundo profesional (¡pues llegué a la cima en una góndola!), la pregunta importante que plantea Silvina —*que si el espacio áulico para la formación de economistas puede ser un espacio que facilite la transformación*— me hizo pensar en las distancias que hay entre cómo la gente vive, piensa y actúa en sus vidas cotidianas, y cómo piensa y actúa en espacios académicos y en procesos de investigación. Se me hace que la respuesta a la pregunta debería ser sí, ¡sin reservas! Pero al crear tantas reglas sobre cómo investigar como un experto, cómo prevenir sesgos en la búsqueda de «la verdad», cómo evitar que la participación de los actores y sus conocimientos «subjetivos» no contaminen el proceso, y cómo entregar las «mejores prácticas» de una forma estándar, terminamos eliminando muchas estrategias que tenemos para conocer el mundo —estrategias y formas de conocer que sí nos permitimos utilizar en los demás ámbitos de nuestras vidas.

Esta línea de pensamiento se me ha estado ocurriendo frecuentemente en este año pasado, probablemente porque he estado haciendo muchas presentaciones sobre la investigación acción participativa (IAP) a diferentes audiencias. En estos espacios a veces me doy cuenta de que lo que estoy predicando como una mejor forma de hacer la investigación y contribuir a cambios reales en el terreno, termina siendo muy básico si lo examinamos más de cerca. Mucho de lo que llamamos IAP es innovador solo en instituciones que han quedado estancadas en “formas correctas” para hacer la investigación. Por ejemplo, involucrar a la gente en cosas que les afectan es básico, no innovador, fuera de la de academia. Lo hacemos en nuestras familias (con niños, hermanas, papás, abuelas, esposas, etc.), en muchos procesos culturales, en colaboraciones entre amistades, en procesos de voluntariado, etc. Como bien nota Silvina, «la formación en la carrera universitaria no solo son conoci-

mientos, sino que forman y estructuran a los profesionales en criterios de investigación. Si estos criterios no son flexibles o reflexivos, pueden generar huellas difíciles de romper». Ya contamos con muchas lecciones para volver transformativo el aula para la formación de economistas, o volver la investigación más participativa y relevante, pues las usamos para lidiar con la vida cada día. Solo hay que dejar de buscar una verdad singular y de la forma «correcta».

Pero como bien plantea Davydd Greenwood, esto puede sonar más simple de lo que es, pues «la historia de la ciencia social en las universidades demuestra un distanciamiento intencional de la interacción social y cuestionamiento político —buscando más bien refugiarse en un positivismo falso que evita utilizar las herramientas de la ciencia social para criticar las contradicciones brutales de las sociedades en las que vivimos» (D Greenwood, comunicación personal marzo 2020). Las huellas que nota Silvina son difíciles de romper efectivamente lo son por ser intelectuales, organizacionales, políticas, etc. —son huellas enraizadas y sistémicas y muy alejadas de los conocimientos y sabidurías cotidianas. Me pregunto, ¿puede la extensión, como plantea Silvina, ser un puente entre mundos que parecen ser poco compatibles?

### **Ejerciendo el rol de la extensión universitaria comunitaria**

La extensión —como una forma que la universidad tiene para acercarse a los grupos sociales, y estos grupos a la formación e investigación— la verdad me parece fascinante. Me hace pensar que el rol de la universidad no se reduce a profesionalizar estudiantes en temas técnicos para sus futuras carreras, sino también tener corresponsabilidad para ayudar a educar a toda la gente del territorio, lo cual requiere interacción con la gente y sus temas. En casi todas las universidades donde he participado como estudiante o profesor, no he percibido que hayamos ejercido este rol de la extensión —o no como una prioridad central. Y hasta en universidades que tienen mandato legal de implementar procesos de extensión, Greenwood comenta que las presiones ejercidas por las grandes empresas agroalimenticias orientaron la extensión agraria, por ejemplo, hacia las grandes empresas y no hacia el pequeño agricultor autónomo. Sin embargo, sin procesos legítimos de extensión, la universidad no puede cumplir su rol local y territorial.

Pero volvemos al problema inicial. Si la universidad descubre su rol de la extensión, va a requerir de capacidades para lidiar con temas complejos, endógenos y muy contextualizados —todo lo que implica el desarrollo territorial. Me pregunto: ¿Qué capacidades y metodologías necesitaría la universidad para ayudar a que su territorio «defina sus objetivos y medios para encontrar una trayectoria de desarrollo»? ¿Qué capacidades tiene para ayudar a que cada comunidad defina sus objetivos «de acuerdo con sus valores y prioridades»? Requeriría nuevos entendimientos sobre sus roles, una visión epistémica del mundo muy amplia, y una gama de metodologías diversas para trabajar de una forma participativa. Esto tomaría años y recursos significativos para desarrollar.

Mary Brydon-Miller y yo escribimos un capítulo llamado «the 500 Hats of the Action Researcher» (2018) (los 500 Sombreros del Investigador en la Acción), en el cual resaltamos que necesitamos múltiples capacidades para jugar los múltiples roles que se nos presentan en procesos de la IAP, pero que nuestra formación académica no nos ha preparado para casi ninguno de estos roles. Son más amplios estos roles todavía para la IADT, e incluyen los elementos que «humanizan» el proceso y nos permiten entender qué pasa a niveles «no técnicos». Ante esto, es inevitable preguntarnos: ¿Qué están haciendo nuestros programas académicos para prepararnos para contribuir a procesos territoriales de una forma relevante? No suficiente. Sin embargo, reitero el punto —sin jugar su rol de extensión local / territorial, la universidad no puede ser relevante (Larrea, 2019).

## **Precisando de rupturas y más investigadores en la acción para desaprender y responder al desafío territorial**

Silvina plantea nuevas rupturas que están orientadas a transformar sus prácticas en la docencia y la investigación. Recalco la importancia que pone en integrar la escritura en primera persona como hábito, sobre todo porque ella también es un actor territorial con nombre y apellido y tiene sus propias experiencias e ideas. ¡Hablar en tercera persona, para mí, es matar lo que nos hace más humanos y esconder el cuerpo! Conectamos con la gente en la vida cotidiana presentes en primera persona, ¿Por qué no en el mundo académico, cuando hasta se lee mejor?

A la vez, me parece importante ocasionalmente tomar distancia del proceso, como sugiere Silvina. En la IAP solemos alentar a que los facilitadores maten el fantasma de la objetividad (Romano, 2019) y de la supuesta deseabilidad de no volverse uno copartícipe del proceso. Es importante insertarnos en el mismo dibujo que queremos cambiar —para generar relaciones de empatía y reconocer que estamos en el mismo territorio con la gente que queremos ayudar (Brydon-Miller, 2020). A la vez, es importante separarse uno a veces, no para prevenir sesgos, sino, como explica Silvina, para darle tiempo a las demás personas para ubicarse o no en el proceso.

También me parece importante la exhortación de Silvina de no facilitar en solitario, sino generar espacios colaborativos y reflexivos con otros colegas —pues resalta que es en procesos colaborativos entre actores con diferentes roles que la coparticipación territorial emerge. No es suficiente que la universidad juegue sus papeles de extensión, con investigación y docencia, sino que aprenda a ser colaborativa como su forma preferida de trabajar. Esto empieza con los profesores entablando conversaciones sobre «qué tipo de investigación hacemos, cómo nos vinculamos, y cómo generamos interacción entre la investigación y la docencia» Sin esta colaboración, difícilmente podemos entender el potencial de la IA en nuestro rol territorial.

## **Regresando al aula «democrática» para promover el aprendizaje auto dirigido**

El semestre pasado (otoño del 2019) co-facilité con otra profesora y dos asistentes de enseñanza una clase llamada «Adult Learning Methods and Strategies» (métodos y estrategias para el aprendizaje de adultos), que tenía el propósito de volver la misma clase más democrática, y apoyar a que los estudiantes se volvieran más auto-dirigidos en su aprendizaje (Brookfield, 2013). En diferentes momentos, escuchamos de algunos estudiantes lo mismo que Silvina: «usted profe, nos tiene que decir qué leer, ¡cómo vamos a proponer nosotros!». ¡Enloquecía cuando los mismos estudiantes respondían así y optaban por no asumir co-responsabilidad por su propia educación y aprendizaje! Otra vez es importante recordar que en otros espacios de la vida estos mismos estudiantes no tienen este nivel de dependencia y demuestran muchos ejemplos de aprendizaje autodirigido.

Romper esta dependencia requiere ensayar procesos como la materia que menciona Silvina —donde «el docente investigador se convierte en un facilitador en el aula y los estudiantes en coinvestigadores de su propio proceso», pero también trabajar en equipo. En nuestro caso, el hecho de que éramos cuatro me dio más confianza para tomar riesgos en la clase. Algo que hicimos fue generar los alcances (outcomes) con los estudiantes para que decidieran qué aprenderían y cómo lo evaluaríamos. Creo que esto ayudó a que tomaran más responsabilidad para su propio aprendizaje, y en retrospectiva definitivamente veo el proceso como uno «de deconstrucción del docente y de los estudiantes».

Deberíamos compartir (entre varios) las estrategias que funcionan para generar aprendizaje autodirigido y el aula democrática, incluyendo las que menciona Silvina. En particular me gustaría entender mejor las posibilidades para mejorar en la «interacción entre la teoría y la prác-

tica, así como en las producciones que surgen de los estudiantes en el marco de la materia y las salidas de campo». En otras palabras, entender mejor el nexo entre la acción y el conocimiento, y de allí, explorar cómo contribuye este nexo a procesos participativos y sostenibles de desarrollo territorial. Compartir ayudaría para seguir formándome para la discusión e implementación epistemológica alternativa, en parte para que haya más responsabilidad compartida entre «residentes expertos», pues estoy preocupado en mi propio caso. Estoy armando un proceso de IAP para la salud y el bienestar comunitario en San Antonio, Texas, y conforme la gente empieza a creer más y más en lo que promete la IAP, me miran a mi para decirles cómo, o para liderar una nueva educación metodológica sobre IAP. ¿Cómo ampliamos esta responsabilidad a más gente y cómo cultivamos y aumentamos la capacidad para implementar estas metodologías para que el proceso no dependa demasiado de pocas personas? Un paso importante lo plantea Silvina, al «pensar el espacio de facilitación entre colegas, a[!] encontrar instancias y lugares internos que nos permitan compartir [...] aprendizajes, dificultades, encuentros y desencuentros que vamos viviendo en cada uno de los proyectos en que participamos».

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## Experiential Post 2

# Reflections on Silvina Romano's chapter on her action research interventions for territorial development in the National University of Tierra del Fuego, Argentina

Andrea Berardi<sup>1</sup>

### Resumen

*Reflexiones sobre el capítulo de Silvina Romano en relación con sus intervenciones de investigación acción para el desarrollo territorial en la Universidad Nacional de Tierra del Fuego, Argentina*

La investigación acción se describe frecuentemente como algo que los investigadores universitarios hacen en contextos que quedan fuera de su propia universidad. El capítulo de Silvina Romano es un raro ejemplo de cómo la investigación acción se vuelve hacia dentro para mirar cara a cara a la universidad: ¿cómo puede uno transformar el pensamiento y la práctica de una universidad frente a repetidos reveses? A través de la interacción con lectores críticos, Silvina fue capaz de generar principios fundamentales de la práctica de la investigación acción para sostener sus futuras intervenciones dentro de su universidad. Pero más importante que lo anterior, ella es capaz de inspirar a lectores como yo para que perseveremos en el cambio transformacional dentro de nuestras propias instituciones.

### Abstract

*Reflections on Silvina Romano's chapter on her action research interventions for territorial development in the National University of Tierra del Fuego, Argentina*

Action research is often described as something that university researchers do within settings outside of one's actual university. Silvina Romano's chapter is a rare example of how action research turns inwards to face the university: how can one transform the thinking and practice of a university in the face of repeated setbacks? Through interacting with criti-

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cal readers, Silvina was able to draw out fundamental principles of action research practice for sustaining her future interventions within her university. But more importantly, she is able to inspire readers like me to persevere with transformational change within our own institutions.



Andrea Berardi with São Paulo State University students and faculty during a workshop on systems thinking and action research that he gave (see <https://pensamentosistemicounespbauru.wordpress.com/uftm/>)

It was a real pleasure to engage with Silvina Romano's chapter exploring her experiences of championing "action research for territorial development" within the National University of Tierra del Fuego (NUTF). I am also grateful for her giving me the opportunity to discuss her experiences, and the chapter's content, during an extended online meeting. Silvina's chapter provides fascinating insights on the major challenges and successes of transforming the practices of a university. NUTF is recently established, with a strong mission to promote economic development within the region. Thus, like Silvina, I too see the significant opportunities for *action research for territorial development* in such a context: action research is a great approach for engaging hitherto marginalised communities of Tierra del Fuego; and a new university might be open to new practices. Yet, you can feel the great disappointment and disillusionment as some colleagues initially fail to embrace the approach, notwithstanding the great effort in engaging them through a seminar series and many personal conversations. In Silvina's narrative, she presents the initial frustrations resulting from limited enthusiasm for action research by some of her colleagues. However, this setback is followed by breakthroughs in a local research project and in courses given to students.

It's clear to me that Silvina is passionate about the potential for liberatory and transformational potential of *action research for territorial development* in the NUTF context. Yet, there are "traditional" prejudices at play that are a perennial impediment to progress. In my interactions with her, I encouraged Silvina to focus on surfacing first person inquiry, so as to allow her to consider the barriers at play not only within her colleagues, but also in her own thinking, and to then highlight the key lessons that she has learnt. This she has done admirably and five key inter-related insights are surfaced in her writing: respect that everyone needs to follow their own transformational journey; appreciate the diversity in

aspirations and perspectives within the university's faculty and student population; strategize and act collaboratively rather than push for transformation through individualistic action, especially in collaboration with unlikely allies, such as those that have limited research experience and therefore more open to novel approaches; prepare for the inevitable "positivist pushback" as the action research intervention begins to have an impact; and practice what you preach, by, for example, writing in the first person within academic outputs and transforming the teaching process with students into action research interventions themselves. These key lessons that Silvina takes away from her experiences have made her a powerful agent for transformational change in her university. In my conversation with her, I hear an individual that has had extremely challenging experiences of action research practice, survived, and like a true action researcher, learnt the lessons and is now ready to face up to bigger and greater battles.

But what lessons have I learnt, as a practicing action researcher, from engaging with Silvina's chapter? Levin and Greenwood (2008, p. 9) state that "the conditions under which AR can prosper in universities are precisely those conditions necessary for the survival of universities as free spaces for teaching and learning, for knowledge development and critique". In the UK where I work, universities have gone through a destructive process of marketization, with students becoming "clients" and senior leaders focusing more on income and inflating their own salaries rather than the civic mission of universities for addressing escalating social and environmental challenges. Pushback on academic practicing action research, especially with marginalised communities, is entrenching. The inquiry championed by Silvina for establishing *action research for territorial development* within the National University of Tierra del Fuego (NUTF) is more than just a personal endeavour. It is an inspiration for how all of us can be champions for transforming universities into beacons of equitable and sustainable territorial development.

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## Chapter 3

# The contribution of PhD processes to the construction of Action Research for Territorial Development

*Amaia Zumeaga<sup>1</sup> and Mikel Zurbano<sup>2,3</sup>*

### **Laburpena**

#### *Doktoregaien ekarpena lurralde garapenerako ikerketa-ekintzaren eraikuntzan*

Orkestrak duela 10 urte ikerketa eraldatzailearen aldeko apustua egin zuen eta bide horretan, Institutuko hainbat ikertzailek ikerketa-ekintzarekin (IE) topo egin zuten eta Lurralde garapenerako ikerketa-ekintzaren (LGIE) komunitatea eraikitzen hasi ziren. Urte hauetan, LGIE komunitatea handitzen joateaz gain, lan egiteko marko bat definitu da, eta bertan parte hartzen duten doktoregaiak, ikertzaileak eta lurraldeko eragileak elkarrekin ikasi dute. Hala, helburu/misio komun bat eraiki dute.

Oraindik asko dago ikasteko eta egiteko. Horregatik, kapitulu honetan, orain arte ikertzaileekin eta markoaren kontzeptualizazioan garatutakoa eta gertatutakoa jasotzea dugu helburu, LGIE oinarriak ulertuz, azken 10 urteetan bizi izandako ezagutuz, baina batik batik doktoregaiak eta gainbegiraleak LGIEko markoaren eraikuntzan izan duten papera ulertzea bilatuz.

LGIEI eraikitzeko garrantzitsua izan den esperimentazio espazioa eskaini dute doktorego prozesuek. Horregatik, doktoregaiekin ikasitakoak markoan izan duen eragina identifikatzeaz gain, gainbegiraleak, doktoregaiak gidatzeaz gain, landutakoa komunitatera eta markora nola transmititu duten definitzea bilatzen du kapituluak.

Era berean, kapituluak LGIEren etorkizunaren inguruan hausnartzen du. Alde batetik, eremu horretan ari dira beren lekua definitzen doktoregai izan ziren eta gaur egun ikertzaileak direnak, gainbegiraleak eta orain doktoregai direnak. Hainbat gairen inguruko gogoeta egin dugu: egindako ekarpenak, bizi izandako esperientziak, ikasitakoa, eta norantza joan nahi dugun, beti komunitate zein norbanako moduan behar duguna kontuan hartuz. Bestetik, berriz, LGIEren beharrak identifikatzen saiatu gara, orain duen irismena handitzeko asmoz.

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<sup>3</sup> Research for this article was carried out under the research group on "Social Economy and its Law" IT1327-19, Research group of the Basque university system 2019-2021 (GEZKI institute, University of the Basque Country, UPV/EHU); and Research Group "Social Economy and its Law", GIU17/052, University of the Basque Country, (UPV/EHU).

## **Resumen**

### ***La contribución de los estudiantes de doctorado a la construcción de la investigación acción para el desarrollo territorial***

Han pasado 10 años desde que Orkestra-Instituto Vasco de Competitividad hizo una apuesta por una investigación transformadora. En este camino varios miembros del instituto conocieron la investigación acción (IA) y comenzó la aventura de construir la comunidad de la investigación acción para el desarrollo territorial (IADT). Durante este tiempo la comunidad ha crecido; se ha definido un marco para la IADT y tanto doctorandos como investigadores y actores del territorio han aprendido. Como resultado, se ha construido una misión/objetivo en común.

Aún hay mucho que hacer y aprender y, para facilitar este aprendizaje, nuestro capítulo realiza una recopilación de lo acontecido a nivel de comunidad investigadora y construcción del marco. Hemos hecho hincapié en entender las bases de la IADT, el proceso vivido durante estos 10 años y, sobre todo, hemos querido comprender el rol de los doctorandos y los supervisores de tesis en la construcción del marco IADT.

Los doctorandos han aportado un espacio de experimentación para la construcción de la IADT. Por ello, el capítulo busca identificar lo aprendido en cada proceso de doctorado y lo que este aprendizaje ha aportado al marco. También hemos definido qué papel han jugado los supervisores, no solo guiando al futuro investigador, sino también transmitiendo lo aprendido en los espacios de experimentación de las tesis al ecosistema y marco IADT.

Finalmente, en el capítulo reflexionamos sobre el futuro de la comunidad creada en torno a la IADT, pues este es el espacio en que los investigadores que un día fueron doctorandos, los supervisores y los presentes doctorandos buscan definir su lugar en el ecosistema. En este contexto, reflexionamos sobre lo aprendido, el valor aportado, las experiencias vividas y sobre hacia dónde queremos ir considerando lo que necesitamos cada uno y lo que necesita nuestra comunidad. Hemos buscado también identificar las necesidades de la IADT para crecer e impactar más aún en el territorio a nivel local e internacional.

# The contribution of PhD processes to the construction of Action Research for Territorial Development

## Introduction

In this chapter, we focus on the role played by PhD procedures in the development of the action research environment, as described by the rest of the chapters. These particular PhD procedures are not standard doctoral processes, since the students are an active part of a project or process in which their commitment, facilitation and research directly influence the construction and realisation of both the project and the doctoral degree. In turn, the supervisor goes beyond his or her role as a mentor and becomes a connector of ideas, synergies and opportunities. Moreover, validation or consensus with the actors is necessary to develop these processes, and as a result, they are like small ecosystems of social change in which every participant is essential. Here, we aim to share our insights into the roles played by different people (many of whom are authors of this book) in building action research for territorial development (ARTD) through their PhD procedures. In doing so, we build on previous work on ARTD PhD procedures (Romano, 2019; Larrea, 2019). However, these publications focused on one specific PhD procedure, and this chapter is the first study that offers an overview of how all these experiences connected to ARTD have shaped this framework.

During the last ten years, there have been six PhD procedures that have approached ARTD from different perspectives, situations, and contexts and which have turned the doctoral procedure and ARTD itself into learning tools and development spaces, thus helping to build the framework that we know today as ARTD. Currently, most of these doctoral students have already completed their theses, and consequently, they are potential supervisors of new PhD procedures, these being interpreted as dialogical processes.

The role of the authors of these dissertations and of their supervisors was crucial in ARTD since they opened a new path, experimenting with the process and contributing to the advancement of this framework.

In the first part of the following analysis, we (co-authors of this chapter) will reflect on the two roles we played, and still do, in the construction of the ARTD framework. This will lead us to establish the challenges and to conceptualise the process of creating the right conditions for building a methodological framework in a traditional context.

In the second part of our analysis, we will outline the future challenges for the framework. More specifically, we will mull over the spaces where we predict that supervisors and doctoral students will coexist with ARTD.

Here, we provide a description of how PhD procedures and supervisors have evolved thanks to ARTD and how ARTD has evolved thanks to these procedures and supervisors. We also share part of the self-inquiry process of one of the authors of this chapter and reflect on her process as a new PhD student in this environment as well as her relationship with this approach.

Thus, it is necessary to understand what has been achieved so far and learn how to contextualise it. Furthermore, it is also important that ARTD evolves over time, especially regarding the new profiles of researchers. This adaptive and inclusive capacity of ARTD is something that has been more than demonstrated in this context over the last decade.

The essence of this chapter is, therefore, to bring to light the conditions and characteristics of ARTD environments and the contribution of PhD processes to those environments.

To achieve the above, we will consider the singularities we have worked with at Orkestra, the Basque Institute of Competitiveness, and at the same time, we will try to find a new voice as researchers and supervisors of PhDs in ARTD, and even meet other explorers willing to engage in *action research* and experiment together with us. We will try to answer the following questions: What makes ARTD so special and attractive to academia and stakeholders? What are the opportunities for the future?

### First period (learning, exploring, and searching for a methodology)

Doctoral theses form the backbone of the story told in this chapter. However, to understand the role they have played in the construction of ARTD, it is important to first frame the steps that had already been taken towards it; that is, even before the first of these PhD procedures was conceived. In this section, we describe this framework.

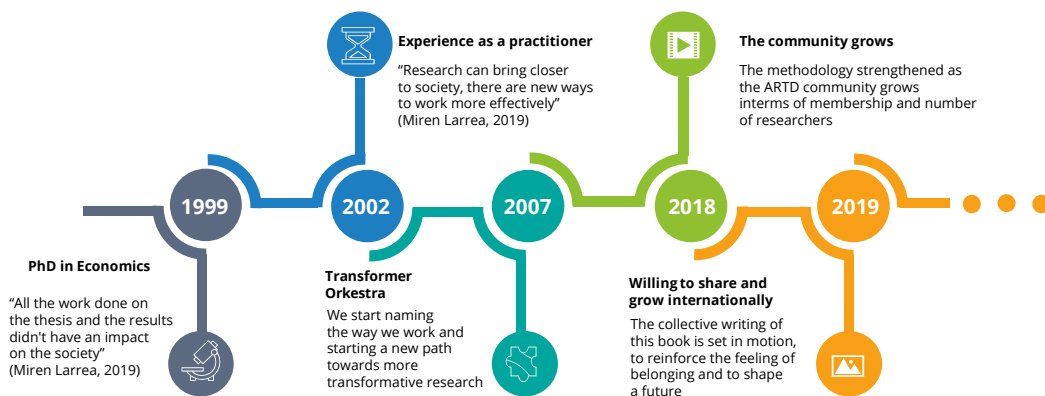
Action research is one methodology among many others, but for Orkestra’s team it is special for one simple reason: its values; that is to say, the way it sees research, and above all, the way it interacts with society, as they match each other perfectly.

In the words of Miren Larrea, who promoted the action research (AR) approach at Orkestra, and more specifically, action research for territorial development (ARTD): “For research to fulfil its role in society, we need various forms of research, and action research is only one of the paths that can be followed, but in our opinion, action research should have a place in the territorial development of Gipuzkoa, and there is still a lot to be developed” (Miren Larrea, Donostia, May 2015).

Normally, we choose a methodology taking into account its utility as a tool to help us obtain results. But what if instead of considering this methodology as something secondary, we considered it as an expression of the values and position of the researcher? We would identify more with its methodological proposal because of its code of values. And this would be reflected in our (the researchers’) aspiration to be innovative in our way of working.

This feeling that one belongs to a place, where one’s way of interpreting research is seen as something normal, was what Miren Larrea and Maria Jose Aranguren experienced when they first heard of *action research*. In order to understand the moment when action research became connected with Orkestra, we provide a brief timeline of the driving factors of this relationship.

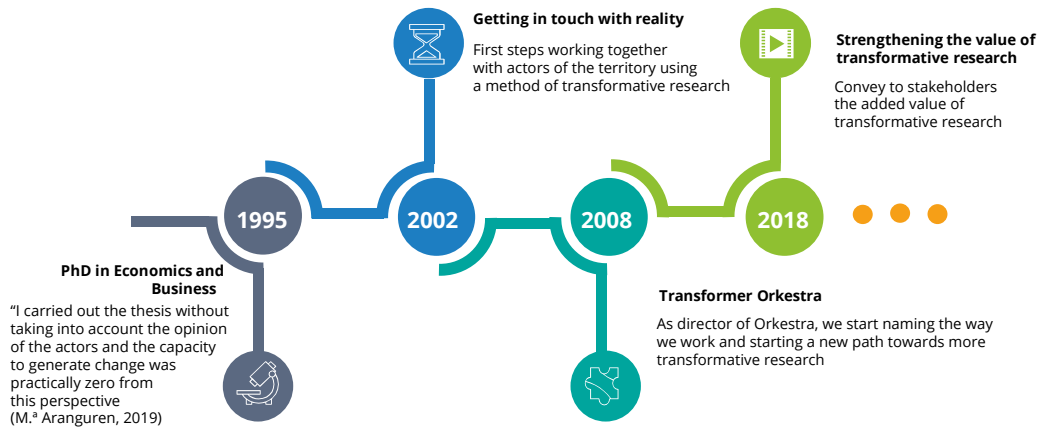
Figure 1. Larrea’s timeline (authors’ design)





Both cases have a key feature in common: bringing research closer to society with the aim of achieving a transformative way of doing research. As we mentioned before, this way of working goes beyond simply choosing a methodology. It is a mixed process in which researchers take a position and select a methodology as a tool for interacting with society, obtaining results, and implementing actions.

**Figure 2. Maria Jose Aranguren’s timeline (authors’ design)**



In their respective trajectories, whether it was as practitioners, or at the university and as researchers, both researchers had been working with different methods but had already shown great interest in more collaborative approaches where the co-generation of knowledge and processes were the main forms of interaction.

In 2006, Orkestra was created with the aim of increasing the Basque Country’s competitiveness, enhancing citizens’ well-being and generating knowledge about regional competitiveness. From the beginning, transformative research was promoted at the Institute. This transformative research was to be carried out on an ongoing basis and was defined as encompassing analysis, reflective thinking, evaluation and proposals for action in order to provide innovative answers and solutions for the challenges posed while acquiring research knowledge. In 2007, Miren Larrea joined the department at Orkestra of which Mari Jose Aranguren was coordinator, and they both began searching for a methodology that matched their way of researching, which was based on their instinct and values, their vision of research as a way of serving society, and on their work experience.

That same year, they attended a conference in Santander where the University of Agder (Norway) participated and which was their first contact with *action research*. This was indeed a turning point that led both promoters to start educating themselves on this field of research and also to begin conceptualising and building a research framework at Orkestra.

From that moment on, challenges emerged continuously. Although Orkestra aimed to work with a transformative research perspective, each research team at the Institute followed a different approach. However, at that time, given that action research was not a mainstream methodology, nor a known one, the actors, the university and Orkestra all had to adapt to this new approach.

During the following years, this process of getting closer to action research proved to be an intense one where feelings of fear and enthusiasm predominated. Since then, several significant milestones have marked the orientation of the ARTD framework. Among the ones worth mentioning are the following: the beginning of the Gipuzkoa Sarean action research process, promoted by the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa, and in which the ARTD framework held a central space for experimentation, as it still does today; the first PhD student to use AR in a doctoral thesis; several publications on the co-generative framework, or the conceptualisation of the facilitators' role. These and many more milestones have shaped the ARTD framework within Orkestra.

### **Second period (first joint outing, public presentation, building an environment)**

In the process of creating an ARTD environment in Orkestra, the completion of doctoral theses which followed an AR methodological approach played a central role in this process and formed its backbone. Miren Estensoro's PhD thesis ("Local networks and socially innovative territories") was the first to incorporate AR effectively in the structure and development of the study framework.

The context in which this pioneering thesis emerged was a very particular one and had to do mainly with the evolution of one of its co-supervisors, Miren Larrea, and her adoption of AR. Another crucial factor was that this thesis belonged to a doctoral programme that welcomed research projects with an open and critical methodological perspective. To be specific, this particular programme called "Development Studies" is an interdisciplinary programme with a research perspective for social transformation including a diverse range of perspectives and methodologies of analysis in general, which are far from mainstream methodologies. It is directed by the Hegoa Institute of the University of the Basque Country (UBC). The acceptance of AR as a PhD methodology is not something that would naturally happen in all PhD programmes at the UBC, but one of the researchers, who was active in the that programme (Mikel Zurbano, author of this chapter), had previous experience with ARTD as supervisor of Miren Estensoro and Pablo Costamagna and led the dialogue with the real supervisor. This trust-based relationship complemented the methodological diversity and open-mindedness in the program.

We should point out that at Orkestra, during the first few years of the 2000s, various projects were being forged and developed that incorporated the ARTD approach. Gipuzkoa Sarean was the most relevant of these projects and played a crucial role in making AR visible since this project used the ARTD approach as its structural axis. This project also influenced Miren Larrea to adopt AR definitively as a methodological and epistemological framework. It was also the period that led to the publication of a reference work written by Miren Larrea together with James Karlsen (Larrea & Karlsen, 2014), and a moment of initiation and creation of the first elements that would make up what is now a small "AR ecosystem" within Orkestra. This first joint publication by Karlsen and Larrea laid the foundation for the new framework.

In this sense, Miren Estensoro's thesis was also another milestone in this process. However, the adoption of an AR perspective in her PhD project had not been initially foreseen. Miren Estensoro was at that time working at Goieki, Goierri's (a Basque county) development agency, and her PhD research proposal aimed to answer a personal concern arising from her work at the agency. The local development projects and dynamics she ran and also reflected on in practice implied doing additional analytical work as well. As a result, she decided to take up the challenge of writing a doctoral thesis.

The approach to the PhD project was developed from the perspective of gaining a theoretical and analytical understanding of the work carried out by local development agen-

cies and offering answers to their needs. In other words, the initial approach of the analysis did not take into account an AR perspective. The research aimed at exploring development agencies within the framework of social innovation and territorial networks. It was somewhat later, but still fairly early on in the PhD procedure, after Miren Larrea's acceptance as PhD co-supervisor, that it was agreed that an AR perspective would be added by including Miren Estensoro's own experience as an active member of Goieki. Consequently, she added a conceptual chapter in which she interpreted action research as a mode of social innovation, and also another chapter, with her reflection about her role as a researcher and actor at the development agency.

In short, the vision of ARTD was not introduced into the thesis at the time of its initial design as a core element, but rather as an additional aspect that was juxtaposed with the initial research project. As it happened, in this thesis, the AR perspective did not generate any of the issues that are usually subject to evaluation in research processes. The reason for this absence is that the reflection on ARTD was incorporated into the thesis *after* its initial design and outlining. In fact, the first dynamics at the start of the PhD procedures point to this fact. The dissertation was part of the "Development Studies doctoral programme" at the University of the Basque Country. To be able to complete registration, a consolidated research proposal had to be presented, which was carried out by the doctoral student under the guidance of the initially proposed supervisor, Mikel Zurbano. According to the research proposal, the thesis was limited to working on the theoretical framework of social innovation and territorial development, which also had to include an applied study of practical cases of all the local development agencies in Gipuzkoa. However, there was no reference to the AR methodology.

Another factor that influenced the decision to juxtapose this approach, rather than introducing it as something that affected the whole thesis, was the fear that the thesis committee would not accept it. But despite all these difficulties, it can be said that with this research, the ARTD approach was formally incorporated in the range of consolidated methodologies for PhD theses. According to its author, ARTD is a useful tool for addressing social and economic transformation processes with a participatory approach. Therefore, this is one of the lessons that can be drawn from the process, after the acceptance of the AR approach as a formal methodology for doctoral theses. As Miren Estensoro herself stated:

"The discovery of ARTD has been decisive for my commitment to research, as it brings together the need for both participation and action in order to transform reality. A characteristic feature of AR and the ARTD framework is that it involves the researcher in the process and makes both the process and its outcome equally important". (Interview by the authors, Miren Estensoro, 2019).

Hence, we may affirm that with Miren Estensoro's dissertation, the ARTD methodology made its way into the field of PhD theses on local development. But in spite of this initial recognition, and even after several successful PhD completions, action research, as Miren Larrea points out, remains a methodology barely used in the training processes of doctoral researchers. Notwithstanding the latter, this thesis marked the beginning of a series of doctoral research projects that have been carried out consecutively within the environment of Orkestra. And indeed, subsequent developments cannot be understood without taking into account its original contribution.

Today it is still difficult to carry out this type of research in both public and private universities since it is not a traditional or mainstream methodology and does not enjoy the same recognition or academic value. Gradually, research initiatives are being carried out based on new methodologies, methods and values, but the process of incorporating them in a traditional institutional context is very slow.

### **Third period (building and strengthening the process, the ARTD framework and its environment)**

As we described above, 2012 was the year when Miren Estensoro completed a thesis which, for the first time, included an AR approach, embodied as two chapters with a theoretical and an empirical perspective, respectively. This thesis represented an empirical milestone in the construction of the ARTD framework since it kicked off a dialogical process between each doctoral student and his or her environment. From here on, a significant evolution of the ARTD framework and its context took place.

While it is true that the role of PhD students is of great consequence for the environment, an analysis of the part undertaken by supervisors is also necessary. The ability of the framework and the environment to provide feedback relies on an ongoing dialogic process in-between the transformation processes (PhD candidate-doctor-supervisor).

Next, we shall analyse each doctoral procedure encompassed by the ARTD framework. To do so, we will look more closely at the PhD candidates' perspective and their contribution to the ARTD framework, whilst also taking into account the role of their supervisors and how the whole environment went on to evolve as a result.

During the completion of Miren Estensoro's thesis, the ARTD environment was still in its infancy and also, there was a great deal of tension going on in the academy due to the methodology's lack of support or acceptance of its validity by most academics.

In this particular phase, where a feeling of insecurity prevailed, the objective was to defend the value of writing from one's own experience while, at the same time, finding actors who, without really knowing what this methodology implied, would be willing to join the project. Thus, it was necessary, and also a priority, to find a space in academia where this approach could be freely developed in two dimensions: (i) for researchers to have a more profound impact on society and (ii) for PhD students and future researchers to facilitate the ARTD learning process and to contribute to the development and empowerment of the ARTD environment and framework.

Also worth highlighting in this period is one of the major achievements in the conceptualisation of ARTD in the previous stage: in 2014, Miren Larrea and James Karlsen published their book *Territorial Development and Action Research: Innovation through dialogue*. With this publication, the basis for the ARTD framework was born, i.e., the *co-generative model*. This work, which may be considered as a first approach to the construction of the ARTD framework or as a partial conceptualisation, would later become one of the pillars of the process.

Pablo Costamagna was the second PhD student in this context. In 2015, he completed his PhD "Policymaking processes and capacity building and training for territorial development". Pablo introduced the connection between the pedagogical approach and action research, which triggered a reflection process on the capacities and roles of facilitating actors. This reflection was enriched by Pablo's work experience as a practitioner, which made it possible to bring together and discover new ways of exchanging and managing knowledge between academia and societal spheres.

"... Action research has become a cultural axis that is partly a strategy and partly a methodology. By interacting with the researcher-actor, as well as with the action researcher at Orkestra, and within a framework of learning through differences, what we provide is a pedagogical dimension. And since training goes hand in hand with research processes, we are currently already talking about a systemic process, a process in which education and research reinforce each other". (Interview by the authors, Pablo Costamagna, 2019).

Two years later, in 2017, Silvina Romano, a compatriot of Pablo Costamagna, defended her thesis, “The role of university in territorial development processes”, whose focal point was the positioning and role of researchers. This PhD procedure helped reaffirm the position of researchers in practice and led to a debate on the recognition and visibility of researchers participating in the ARTD process. That same year, Miren Larrea and Pablo Costamagna contributed to the development of the co-generative model adding a key ingredient: they conceptualised the facilitating actor’s role through the publication of a book called “Facilitative Actors of Territorial Development. A Social Construction-Based Approach”.

Silvina Romano’s PhD procedure led to new debates in academic circles due to a lack of understanding related to the thesis, which made finding a “safe space” within academia a constant challenge. The following extracts are proof of this situation:

“10/5/2015: Academia itself does not seem to understand that a plurality of views exists. Social processes are not quantifiable. But how can one change the system when many believe that measuring is the most important thing? How can we guarantee that education shows that a plurality of ideas exists and that when we make a choice it is important to know why we are making that choice?” (Romano, 2019).

“... Nowadays, there is an epistemological doubt, which is positive, and helps us to see other dimensions of the problem with a greater perspective, something that had not been possible for me until that moment” (Interview by the authors, Romano, 2019).

During the following two years, concepts that had been worked on from 2008 to 2017 gradually took shape, and all actors involved in the ARTD framework created a common language, which was used both within the organisation as well as in the projects shared with society. At this time, international recognition of the framework increased considerably, and this helped raise new challenges and discussions.

Ainhoa Arrona was the next PhD student to play her part in the construction of the ARTD framework. Her positioning in particular helped us to understand that when carrying out AR it is not necessary to be an “insider researcher”: the ARTD framework *can* be transformed into an inclusive space, and its valued collective capacity can be reinforced. Ainhoa completed her PhD “Research and multi-actor collaboration in territorial development policy-making” after having been part of the environment since 2008 when the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa launched a project. She first came in contact with action research and the ARTD environment when she was still a member of a task force at the Council. After some time, she went from being an actor (Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa) to being a member of the research team’s technical staff and finally, to being a researcher within the ARTD framework.

One of the debate’s central issues was the researchers’ positioning. At the time of their PhD research, Miren Estensoro, Pablo Costamagna, Silvina Romano, and Patricia Canto, each claimed an insider position in the process they were analyzing. However, this was not the position sought by Ainhoa Arrona. Through her thesis, she became more connected to the development of ARTD as an external observer rather than as an internal facilitator.

“I am more interested in action research as an object of study or from a theoretical perspective than using it as my own research methodology.” (Interview by authors, Arrona, 2019).

“As I said earlier, I knew I wasn’t going to be an action researcher. I had been observing one for years and I knew I was not going to be like her. Greenwood and Levin (2007) helped me understand and express that gut feeling. They describe the skills any action researcher should have, which I clearly do not have. (...) Practice has also reinforced this idea in me. I prefer administrative work rather than taking on a facilitation role; I prefer writing a report rather than facilitating a workshop; I truly enjoy observing people and processes, not leading them” (PhD Personal Diary, Arrona, 2016).

That same year, Patricia Canto defended her doctoral thesis whose title was “Research Institutes as Change Agents in Territorial Development. An Analytical Framework on Responsible Research Communication”. In this case, the distinguishing feature is the way the thesis was carried out. Patricia Canto was the first PhD student in the framework to carry out a complete AR cycle during her PhD procedure. This shows that, after 11 years of continued work, conditions and capacities can be developed and are of great value. A particular aspect we should highlight here is that this PhD procedure can be considered as a whole AR cycle developed in favourable conditions.

“Action research is achieving the transversality of our spaces, and we will try to focus more on the process than on its outcome. This step will reinforce and establish our way of working without imposing our methodology on anyone, and will also seek to bring together the different ways of working at the Institute”. (Interview by the authors, Patricia Canto, 2019)

Whilst discussions were taking place among academics, the situation of the fieldwork carried out together with stakeholders was entirely different: action researchers began to be recognised, and the environment started to settle down.

In Patricia Canto’s case, an experiment was done where a doctoral thesis involved a complete AR cycle with stakeholders who belonged to the ARTD environment. That is why we consider that our next challenge should be to complete a PhD using AR and the ARTD framework in an unfamiliar context (i.e., with actors outside the ARTD environment). This is the beginning of a new phase where learning will continue, but where the most determinant factors and conditions will be external.

In short, what we want to highlight here is the transformation experienced during the last 11 years in the PhDs procedures completed using the ARTD methodology. Starting from an approach to AR, we have worked on the positioning and visibility of the researcher and the facilitating actors. In addition to building a framework, we created a community and an environment with a shared vision and common values where research and society work together. But all this constituted the creation stage and the ARTD framework’s identity is now well defined; thus, we may well be in the transition to the next stage.

On the other hand, we would like to stress the relevant role PhD supervisors played in building the framework. While PhD students took on the more visible role and their theses reflected the advances made, supervisors played multiple roles as caregivers, trend hunters, condition and capacity developers, and promoters of change.

They were all protagonists who learnt a great deal during the process, but each one from a different position and with different competences.

## **A synthesis of PhD procedures in ARTD**

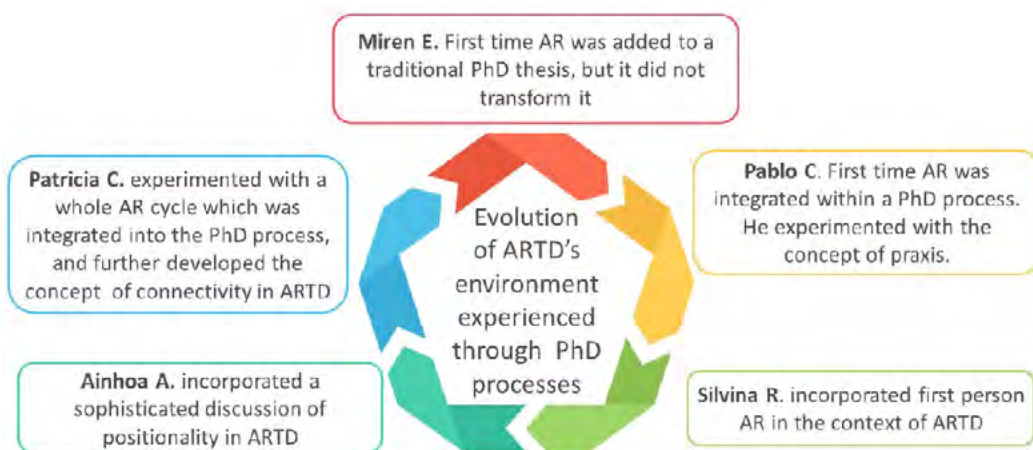
The figure further below shows the contribution of PhD procedures to the evolution of the ARTD framework. As can be observed, the contribution of each PhD candidate has been unique, and that is why the evolution of the framework is not a linear one. Furthermore, most of the theses developed have a clear connection with action research and hence, we cannot ignore the role of PhD supervisors.

In contrast, the role of supervisors *did* have a linear evolution, which is logical since the main purpose of supervisors is to be visionary and to guide PhD students through the uncertainties of their doctoral procedure. One of the peculiarities and key elements in the development of the framework is that Miren Larrea participated directly and indirectly in all the PhD

procedures, allowing for free experimentation within action research. The researchers who supervised these processes also provided a connection to external issues and facilitated the acceptance of the methodology in new environments.

Finally, we can conclude that PhD procedures are spaces for experimentation and that supervisors contribute to the collective building of the framework by connecting these processes.

**Figure 3: Evolution of ARTD's environment through PhD procedures (authors' design)**



#### Fourth period (and the future?)

The objective of the fourth stage but not the last one, the same as that of this book, is to gather all these experiences and reflect on what lies ahead. In this sense, we may venture to say that from now on the future of the ARTD framework will be more international and will face even more demanding challenges.

Over the last two decades, we have gained an understanding of the whole idea behind the framework and also of how this endeavour started. Furthermore, we have been able to analyse its evolution and the influence of dialogical processes taking place between the framework, the PhD students, and supervisors.

The ARTD framework built during the past eleven years has enabled us to create an interdisciplinary community in which private and public actors from the territory, society and academia work for the common good in a collaborative and emerging governance where experimentation and ongoing assessments form the basis for learning and helping build the framework. Moreover, by meeting and addressing society's challenges in a way that is direct and operable, this framework shows huge potential to close the gap in social sciences. But its greatest capacity lies in the natural way in which it establishes and consolidates connections among territorial development actors.

If we take a look at the academic world, we may say that a pedagogical revolution is taking place which is changing the way of viewing and living the university, since methods of learning have become more interactive and didactic and are closer to reality. The AR framework, and more specifically its methodology, possesses a tremendous value for transform-

ing academia and its knowledge generation processes, starting with the writing of PhDs and ending with its capacity and ways to transfer knowledge.

Although it is true that ARTD is gradually being accepted by participating communities, there are still major challenges ahead, for example, to make the AR community grow, to further demonstrate its validity as a methodology, and to achieve a definitive acknowledgement from the various academic fields. In short, the aim is now for ARTD to continue advancing and to build a model of sustainable territorial development.

As we carried out this study, we have had the opportunity to talk with all actors of the process, and also amongst ourselves (the authors) as active subjects which participated in it.

It should also be noted that one of the authors of this chapter has just started to undertake action research and this writing process has helped her reflect on her role in the ARTD environment and to understand, learn and value everything that she has achieved so far.

What we have built up until now is something unique and special, a community with a different way of working, interacting, and researching that seeks to attain a win-win situation for all participants. The key is in the people and their way of behaving, as they actively listen to participants, as well as in their availability and adaptability during the process. The future will be built day by day, and new members will be able to make contributions to the environment thanks to what has been learnt so far and their needs and enthusiasm.

That is why we would like to finish this chapter by conveying a message of hope for the future and encouraging fellow researchers to write similar books with their own experiences and proposals.

To sum up, the key to the construction of the ARTD framework lies in the dialogical process between PhDs students, supervisors and actors in the territory. Moreover, continued learning allows us to create a common language that can serve as a pillar for developing a methodology where all the actors can recognise each other.

PhD students can play an even bigger part within the process since they carry out their theses *on* the process. Furthermore, the ways in which they interact with their supervisors and interpret the process, which are more than merely a tool, are also essential for obtaining a final satisfactory result. This interaction brings their research closer to the reality of territorial development, as well as contributing to the suitability of the actions designed, and eventually, involves both supervisors and PhD students as actors in the process.

With all its light and shadows, the ARTD framework has been, is and will be one where territories, communities and people can grow, learn, and evolve. In fact, its values are the basis of the process, and decisions are made in a participatory process with people.

And last but not least, the future challenges for the implementation and development of the ARTD framework are the following:

- To develop the framework's systemic view.
- To train actors both through formal and informal education.
- To reform and promote academic networks at international and national levels.
- To create open spaces to share and build a common vision based upon different research approaches

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## Short Chapter 3

# AR reflections and experiences from a practitioner perspective

*Fiammetta Wegner*<sup>1</sup>

### **Resumen**

*Reflexiones y experiencias sobre la IA desde la perspectiva de las personas vinculadas a la práctica*

En este capítulo exploro dos temas de aprendizaje que se han generado a través de mi experiencia practicando y aplicando la Investigación Acción Participativa (IAP) fuera de la academia, junto con un grupo de colegas de Recrear International. Recrear es una comunidad de jóvenes investigadores y emprendedores interesados en la transformación social desde un lugar de conciencia emocional, creatividad, co-creación y cuidado.

Uno de los temas, se centra en cómo la Investigación Acción (IA) en un entorno académico y de doctorado puede beneficiar de las redes y aprendizajes generado por la aplicación de IA fuera del contexto académico. El capítulo analiza cómo la IA se puede expandir para informar y enriquecer muchos contextos y disciplinas y a cambio alimentarse de dichos intercambios. En particular, analiza cómo las asociaciones y organizaciones enfocadas a nivel local, dirigidas por jóvenes, artísticos y de sanación pueden proporcionar inspiración que pueda retroalimentar a IA en la academia, así como a redes que pueden apoyar y sostener a los estudiantes de doctorado.

El segundo tema analiza cómo un enfoque más fuerte en la investigación a nivel personal puede soportar los programas de doctorado y los esfuerzos de profesionales para afectar el cambio social. Sostengo que girar nuestras lentes hacia adentro para comprender qué cambio queríamos conseguir y porqué puede ayudarnos a abordar los posibles puntos ciegos y mantener un equilibrio frente a la complejidad. La capacidad de aprender y transformarse internamente también puede facilitar nuestros esfuerzos hacia el cambio social.

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**Abstract*****AR reflections and experiences from a practitioner perspective***

In this chapter I explore two themes that have been generated through my experience of practicing and applying Participatory Action Research (PAR) outside of academia, together with a group of colleagues from Recrear International. Recrear is a community of young researchers and entrepreneurs interested in social transformation from a place of emotional grounding, creativity, co-creation, and care.

One theme focuses on how Action Research (AR) in an academic and PhD environment can benefit from networks and learning generated from the application of AR outside academia. The chapter analyses how AR can be expanded to inform and enrich many contexts and disciplines while being nurtured from such exchanges in return. In particular it looks at how partnerships with spaces and organisations focused on grassroots, youth-led, artistic and healing efforts can provide inspiration which can feed back into academia as well as networks which can support and sustain PhD students.

The second theme looks at how a stronger focus on inner-level inquiry can leverage AR, PhD programmes and the effort of practitioners in affecting social change. I argue that turning our lenses inwards to understand what change we are striving for and why can help us address potential blind spots and remain balanced in the face of complexity. The ability to learn and transform internally can also leverage our efforts towards wider scale social change.

## AR reflections and experiences from a practitioner perspective

It was at an action research (AR) gathering at Chalmers University in Goteborg organised by AR+ and Transformations Forum where I met Miren for the first time. We had a shared interest to keep exploring with AR in spaces situated outside of the academic context, to ultimately understand how AR can best support social change.

Among the various themes which emerged at the AR gathering, there are two which I keep encountering in my Participatory Action Research (PAR) practice. One concerns learnings over how AR can develop in non-academic spaces; and the other one is the potential of AR to leverage individual transformation for social change. When Miren suggested I contributed to *Roots and Wings of Action Research for Territorial Development* I put forward those two themes, which are also touched upon in Amaia and Mikel's chapter from an academic prospective and within the context of a PhD practice.

My experience of AR first generated through a Master programme at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and then by PAR with a community of researchers and entrepreneurs organised around an NGO called Recrear International. At Recrear, we understand AR as a set of values as much as a discipline and methodology, which can be applied to pretty much any aspect of our work. We run strategic reviews and team retreats as well as external research projects as a PAR process. Furthermore, we keep the doors open to collaborations with people and groups from a wide spectrum of disciplines. So far, this has led us to work with youth groups, therapists, social theatre practitioners, traditional healers, dance collectives, musicians, development practitioners and videographers among others.

## What AR feels like outside of Academia in my experience

As highlighted by other contributors in this book, historically AR has evolved both within and outside academia, for example in the context of community work in South America with Orlando Fals Borda or within organisational development contexts such as in the case of Peter Reason. AR has the capacity to evolve across different spaces, practices and disciplines enriching all of them while being expanded in turn. In this section, I complement the perspective of Amaia and Mikel's chapter, which is contextualised in academia, with a perspective from other environments.

At Recrear, partnerships with grassroots organisations and practitioners allowed us to experiment, mix and adopt different practices and tools to enhance our approach to AR. For instance, in some of our programmes we worked with a community based in Colombia called El Juego Consciente (The Conscious Game), whose members infuse healing practices and conflict transformation. Engaging with them in collective therapeutic processes where conflict is allowed to emerge and engaged with in a generative way, allowed us to approach our participative inquiries with increased emotional presence and ability to hold space for vulnerability (Aabye, Gioacchino, Wegner, 2021).

As most of Recrear members are interested in artistic methods, such as creative writing, theatre and movement, we accompany our PAR explorations with creative practices. These allow us to explore throughout faculties other than our rational ones, such as embodiment and emotional expression. Through these practices we are able to engage in personal inquiry in a way that feels generative and which can open new possibilities of individual and collective transformation.

Thanks to this expansive and creative understanding of AR, our exploration with the discipline allowed us to create inquiry opportunities that led us to explore ourselves and our collective interactions to a much deeper, transformative and exciting level, where we are able to approach inner change from a place of emotional knowledge and relational authenticity.

This openness to inner level inquiry and change, allows us to create more effective learning and change dynamics at the organisational level as well as informing how we relate to partners and other entities in our ecosystem.

## Inner level to societal level change

Most people agree that our own internal system is a reflection of the external one and vice-versa, and therefore for social transformation to thrive we need to work at both levels. At the same time, we all feel the urge to act promptly since catastrophic environmental breakdown is becoming more and more a shared reality; political systems are in crisis; inequality, injustice and intolerance are plaguing our world; and our education and knowledge production systems don't seem to allow us to respond timely to these crises. In this section I go deeper in the connection between self-inquiry, which could be more intentionally included in PhD programmes, and wider societal change.

Some people worry that too much focus on inner level transformation can hamper action at systemic level. Watkins and Shulman (2008) explain that it's rare for an AR type of project to succeed in being at the same time analytical and impactful. And yet, I think it's critical that action is pursued with attention and space given to critical reflection, focused both inward and outward.

In my experience, self-inquiry is an essential ingredient for social change. Giving time and space to understanding our personal relationship to the change we want to bring, can help us asking hard questions and putting a magnifying lens on our blind spots.

Our world is complex and full of unhelpful dynamics, which are hard to identify and address. Exploring questions such as: what are my intentions, assumptions, beliefs? What is my role in contributing to change? Am I doing anything to hamper it? Am I using my power in a generative way? Can help us not replicating unhelpful systems, structures, norms and power dynamics which we might otherwise unconsciously recreate. As one participant at the AR gathering beautifully put it, we might get stuck in the parking lot of research, wanting to do good but stuck in a system which doesn't allow us to do so.

Self-inquiry doesn't act as a magic bullet allowing us to break free of norms, structures and systems hampering our vision and practice. Ultimately the case for many researchers and practitioners is that we are working in institutions and organisations which are perpetuating oppression, colonisation, climate change, inequality and unhealthy human relationships. That's why it's important that we keep vigilant.

Questioning ourselves and what we contribute towards, helps us to name and make visible those unhelpful structures, norms and dynamics, so that we can talk about them, challenge them and eventually change them. A person or a system which is unable to engage in self-inquiry, scrutiny and critique, together with all the learning which emerges from such processes, to me is a system that cannot transform. Moreover, in the very arduous task of pursuing social change, knowing our position and values can help us keep centred while navigating complexities.

First-person inquiry is no easy task, probably as hard as attempting to affect systemic change. It can be draining, exhausting and confusing. But it can also be revolutionary, revelatory and a lot of fun. For me having a group of colleagues at Recrear willing to explore through experimental practices and partnerships has been the most important resource. Together, by intentionally co-creating brave inquiry spaces and through the power of creative practices, we have been increasingly focusing on how to surface emotional and embodied knowledge. These can be an incredible asset in AR and social change if we know how to access and leverage them.

## Concluding reflections

According to my learning experience with PAR, how the discipline evolves and expands outside academia, and especially in youth-led, activism, spiritual and artistic spaces can provide exciting inspiration and much needed nourishment for AR's generative and transformative essence.

Collaborations with actors operating in different contexts and disciplines which enhance our capacity for inner-level collective inquiries, could help us transition from an *ego to eco-system* mentality (Otto Scharmer, 2013), allowing for a deep shift in consciousness so that we begin to care, act and impact more in tune with the interests of the entire ecosystem in which we live.

This can potentially get us from inner to systemic change and link our personal transformation needs to those of our broader society, while creating a new ecosystem to sustain, inspire and nourish our efforts.

In the case of PhD students, creating partnerships in such spaces can provide learning, inspiration and support networks which might be critical in forming their understanding and approach to AR, as well as placing their projects in a wider context of social change efforts.

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## Experiential Post 3

# Beyond the action research/conventional research divide

*Hans Christian Garman Johnsen*<sup>1</sup>

### **Resumen**

#### ***Más allá de la división entre la investigación acción y la investigación convencional***

Los estudiantes de doctorado e investigadores del ámbito de la investigación acción tienden a argumentar su posición en contraposición a la *investigación convencional*. Esto focaliza la atención en gran medida en cómo se organiza la investigación y las acciones realizadas por el investigador. En este post se argumenta que la atención debería orientarse a responder a la siguiente pregunta: ¿qué es el conocimiento científico? El nivel de integración de la investigación y la práctica es, por supuesto, interesante, pero sólo si se puede argumentar que genera conocimiento científico.

### **Abstract**

#### ***Beyond the action research/conventional research divide***

PhD students and researchers within action research tend to argue their approach against *conventional research*. This has put lots of attention on how research is organised and on the actions that researchers take. In this experiential post I argue that attention should rather be on answering the following question: what is scientific knowledge? The level of integration between research and practice is of course of interest, but only if it can be argued to lead to scientific knowledge.

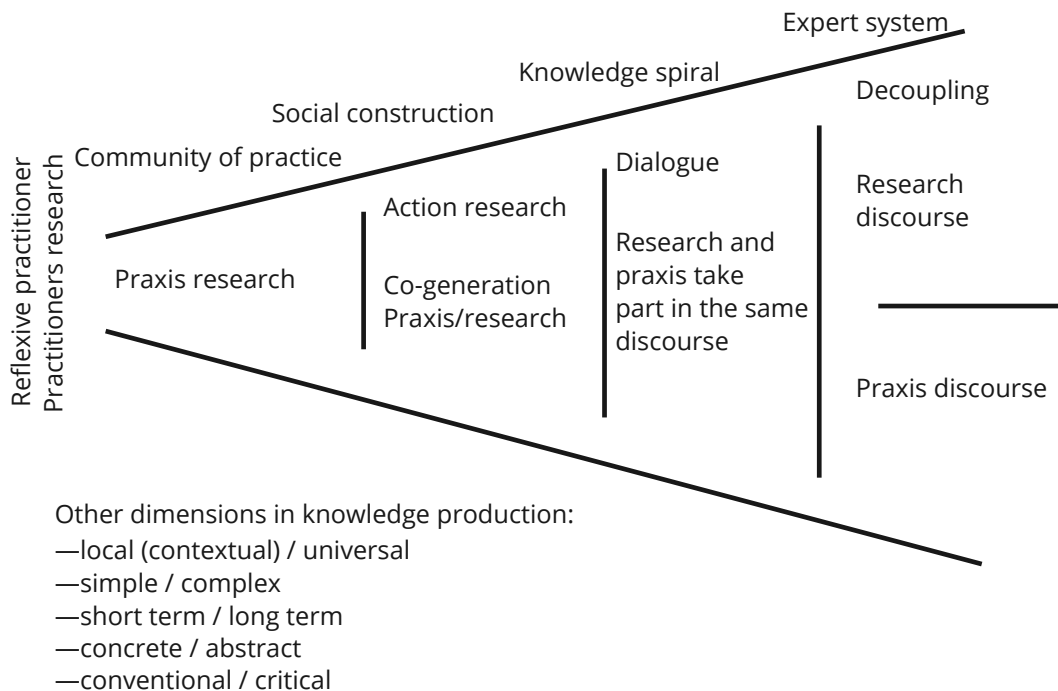
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It has been a common trend in action research (AR) to argue why this research should be acceptable even if it deviates from *conventional research*. The core of these stories is that adopting an AR approach often represents a break with dominant (positivistic) positions at the university, and thus is a personal decision that implies that researchers position themselves, sometimes against common practice. In this respect, many PhD students writing within AR could identify with this story and this is precisely where I connect with the chapter by Zumeaga and Zurbano in this book, in order to share my own experience.

Looking beyond this kind of story, one could ask if the confrontation between AR and *conventional research* is fruitful. Some years ago, I made the Figure 1 in order to illustrate tensions in the academic community on issues related to research approaches. At the one extreme research is decoupled from social practice and it identifies structures that are universal, complex to discover and abstract in nature. In this position research represents criticisms or renewal of established knowledge. The ambition is to discover long term and durable laws of causal relations. Einstein’s general theory of relativity would be a prime example of this kind of research. At the other extreme is research, which is close to social practice, that is local, simple in the sense of being easily accessible and short term in the sense of solving problems in a concrete context that is not necessarily repeatable. I refer here to a researcher solving a practical problem, or what Donald Schön called *the reflective practitioner* and Stephen Toulmin called a *clever consultant*.

**Figure 1. Levels of integration between research and practice**



Source: own elaboration.



The question to be reflected on, as I see it, is if all development of knowledge along this continuum, is science. To put it differently I pose the following question: has the discussion about these different forms of integration between research and practice anything to do with science at all? Related to this: what are science and scientific knowledge? Does the way we organise research or hegemonic opinions in universities or approaches to research have any validity related to the issue of what science is? Karl Popper talked about the *demarcation problem*; the border between science and non-science. Can this border be identified along the continuum in Figure 1?

Let me try to shortly motivate why these questions are relevant to consider. Kurt Lewin, seen as the founding father of AR, was strongly involved with and influenced by logical positivism. Sociotechnical Systems (STS) theory, in many ways closely related to AR, is also close to positivistic thinking. Thus, the divide is not necessarily between AR and positivism, but rather the question is: what is good research, what is good science and how do we go about to achieve them?

Bjørn Gustavsen, a central thinker within AR, responded in the early 1990's to the criticism of Norwegian work life research being non-scientific with an attempt to develop a more solid philosophical foundation for this research. This became the *dialogical approach* to work life research. I think the right response is that *good research and ultimately science digs deep into the foundation of our thinking and knowledge*. This is the case independent on where you are on the continuum indicated by Figure 1. Supporting this argument, one might refer to thinkers as different as Karl Popper and Hans-Georg Gadamer. Both came with strong warnings against making science into procedures, methods and repetition.

Thus, reflecting on one's approach to science is often the first phase in developing a position that allows one to break loose of conventions and repetitive and institutionalised ways of thinking that, at best, give us not science, but some sort of copying of existing knowledge. The next stage is to use the freedom from these conventions to develop scientific knowledge.



## **PART II**

*Action research for territorial development* in the intersection  
of educational and territorial strategies

## **PARTE II**

*La investigación acción para el desarrollo territorial* en la  
intersección entre estrategias educativas y territoriales



## Capítulo 4

# Construcción de capacidades individuales en la Investigación Acción para el Desarrollo Territorial. Aportes desde el Enfoque Pedagógico

*Pablo Costamagna*<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

*Construction of individual capabilities in Action Research for Territorial Development. Contributions from the Pedagogical Approach*

This chapter deals with the relationship between *the pedagogical approach for territorial development* and *action research for territorial development* (ARTD) in a postgraduate training program, the Master in Territorial Development of the National Technological University of the Regional Faculty of Rafaela, Argentina, linked to a research institute, Praxis Research Institute, of the same faculty.

I share an experience where we work to combine the construction of individual (mainly addressed in the pedagogical approach) and collective (mainly addressed in ARTD) capabilities. This combination is one of the central features of our efforts to integrate diverse approaches. Precisely, this chapter aims at enriching the conceptualization of ARTD through the strengthening of its approach to individual capabilities.

To do this, I share the analysis of how, in the context of Rafaela, these two approaches have mutually strengthened, and I propose how ARTD can integrate these learnings into its research frameworks and processes.

The objective of this chapter is thus to make the contribution of the pedagogical approach to ARTD visible. It is an attempt to explain the lessons learned in a process where we transformed first from not working with action research to doing it in a way that was complementary to—but differentiated from—our core training processes. Subsequently, we evolved from complementarity to the integration of both perspectives. This means we underwent a process of deconstruction of our practice, which up to then had separated training and research.

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<sup>1</sup> Instituto Praxis-Universidad Tecnológica Nacional. FRRA/Universidad Nacional de Rafaela. Argentina.

This proposal is greatly influenced by Paulo Freire and the interpretation of complexity as an integrating framework for research and training in the territory. I address some breaks and new elements that have brought qualitative leaps in the relationship between the construction of individual and collective capabilities. This has happened through collaboration between actors (teachers, researchers, students, politicians among others) who had previously been acting separately. The chapter is also an attempt to give some answers to the question that guides the chapter and works as a challenge: What reflections can be useful for other processes or for other researchers who want to integrate training in ARTD?

## **Resumen**

### ***Construcción de capacidades individuales en la Investigación Acción para el Desarrollo Territorial. Aportes desde el Enfoque Pedagógico***

Este capítulo aborda la relación entre el Enfoque Pedagógico para el Desarrollo Territorial y la Investigación Acción para el Desarrollo Territorial (IADT) en un espacio formativo de postgrado, la Maestría en Desarrollo Territorial de la Universidad Tecnológica Nacional Facultad Regional Rafaela, Argentina, vinculado a un Instituto de investigación, el Instituto de investigación Praxis, de la misma facultad.

Es una experiencia donde se trabaja para combinar la construcción de capacidades individuales (más ligadas al Enfoque Pedagógico) y colectivas (más ligadas a la IADT) como uno de los elementos centrales de la integración de enfoques. Precisamente, en este escrito se intenta enriquecer la conceptualización de la IADT a través del fortalecimiento de su abordaje de las capacidades individuales.

Para ello, se parte del análisis de cómo, en el contexto de Rafaela, estas dos aproximaciones se han fortalecido mutuamente y se propone cómo la IADT puede integrar estos aprendizajes en sus marcos y procesos investigativos.

Entonces, el objetivo de este capítulo es visibilizar el aporte que se está haciendo al desarrollo de la IADT a través de la integración con el enfoque pedagógico. Es un intento de explicitar los aprendizajes obtenidos en un proceso donde se pasa, en primer lugar, de no trabajar con la investigación acción a hacerlo en forma complementaria a la formación y, posteriormente, a avanzar en la integración de ambas perspectivas. En este camino emerge un proceso de deconstrucción sobre nuestra práctica, que dividía formación e investigación.

Esta propuesta está muy influenciada por Paulo Freire y las ideas de la complejidad como marco integrador para la investigación y formación en el territorio, y propone algunas rupturas y nuevos elementos para obtener saltos cualitativos en la relación entre la construcción de las capacidades individuales y las colectivas. Lo hace sumando actores (docentes, investigadores/as, alumnos/as, políticos entre otros) que venían actuando por separado. Es un intento, además, de dar respuestas a la pregunta que guía el capítulo y funciona como reto: ¿Qué reflexiones pueden ser útiles para otros procesos o para investigadores e investigadoras que quieran integrar la formación en la IADT?

# Construcción de capacidades individuales en la Investigación Acción para el Desarrollo Territorial. Aportes desde el Enfoque Pedagógico

## Introducción

Este capítulo aborda la relación entre el Enfoque Pedagógico para el Desarrollo Territorial (en adelante, EP) y la Investigación Acción para el Desarrollo Territorial (IADT) en un espacio formativo de postgrado vinculado a un instituto de investigación. En nuestra praxis, en Rafaela (Argentina), trabajamos para combinar la construcción de capacidades individuales y colectivas, como uno de los elementos centrales de la integración de enfoques. El objetivo del capítulo es enriquecer la conceptualización de la IADT a través del fortalecimiento de su abordaje de las capacidades individuales. Para ello, se parte del análisis de cómo, en el contexto de Rafaela, estas dos aproximaciones se han fortalecido mutuamente para proponer cómo la IADT puede integrar algunos de estos aprendizajes en sus marcos.

Para describir y analizar el proceso, nos situamos en el ámbito de la Maestría en Desarrollo Territorial de la Universidad Tecnológica Nacional Facultad Regional Rafaela, Argentina (a partir de ahora Maestría o MDT), y el Instituto de Investigaciones Tecnológicas y Sociales para el Desarrollo Territorial (Praxis), de la misma Facultad en la ciudad de Rafaela, Provincia de Santa Fe, Argentina.

Para contextualizar, es preciso explicitar que mi formación estuvo ligada a la educación popular y a las enseñanzas del pedagogo brasileño Paulo Freire. Estas ideas se entremezclaron con otras perspectivas más disciplinares, como la economía y la política, y además con mi experiencia de haber sido parte de una gestión del gobierno local y haber podido trabajar en otros territorios de América Latina. Desde hace más de una década, junto con el doctorado en estudios del desarrollo, he recuperado estas influencias mientras me vinculaba con la construcción del EP e iniciaba una interacción con Orkestra, Instituto Vasco de Competitividad y la IADT. Ahora, cabe aclarar también que, este proceso no lo construye una persona sino equipos y sus relaciones por lo cual el documento se narra a veces como experiencia personal otras veces desde la tercera persona en singular y otras en plural como una manera de visibilizar estas situaciones.

La construcción del EP nace en el 2009 como un planteo crítico a nuestras prácticas formativas y de acompañamiento en procesos de desarrollo territorial en América Latina. Tiene su primer desarrollo en el marco del Programa de formación para el Desarrollo Territorial con inclusión para América Latina y el Caribe, BID/FOMIN<sup>1</sup> (Conecta DEL). La manera de enseñar condicionaba la forma de vincularnos a los actores e impedía ser consecuentes con el diálogo, la nueva gobernanza y la construcción de capacidades locales que planteábamos en las definiciones del desarrollo territorial. Como más adelante se explica, este proceso de construcción continúa y se fortalece tanto en la Maestría como en Praxis.

En el año 2010 comienza la conexión con Orkestra donde tomamos contacto con la IADT a través de Miren Larrea. Fue en esta relación cuando vimos la utilidad de trabajar el cambio en tiempo real a partir de la identificación de problemas compartidos. El proceso de aprendizaje tuvo varias fases. En un principio, la interacción nos llevó a reflexionar sobre cómo *acompañar* procesos desde la investigación acción en Praxis, para luego ir descubriendo de forma más profunda este enfoque y su pertinencia para fortalecer la *co-construcción* de conocimiento en la acción.

<sup>1</sup> Programa especializado en formación y construcción de capacidades para el Desarrollo Territorial con sede en distintos países de América Latina. Para ampliar información: [www.conectadel.org](http://www.conectadel.org)

El contexto principal en que se está trabajando esta complementación está compuesto por la Maestría, un espacio de formación reglada cuya aprobación como postgrado fue en el año 2009 y lleva cinco cohortes cursadas por más de 100 alumnos y alumnas; y el Instituto Praxis, un centro creado en el año 2014 y cuyas principales líneas están vinculadas a la investigación acción<sup>2</sup>.

En este apretado resumen es importante remarcar que la vinculación entre Maestría/Praxis y Orkestra generó una relación rica y densa en interacciones. Se realizaron tesis doctorales, artículos y libros compartidos, como la serie en colaboración denominada «Desarrollo Territorial». También hubo visitas a Rafaela (Argentina) y a Orkestra por parte de investigadores e investigadoras, participación en clases de Maestría, en talleres de una y otra organización y en proyectos de largo plazo, que han permitido mantener y fortalecer el vínculo entre ambas comunidades, pero, sobre todo, se han sostenido los aprendizajes en el tiempo.

*Con base en lo anterior, el objetivo de este capítulo es explicitar el aporte que desde Rafaela estamos haciendo al desarrollo de la IADT a través de la integración con el enfoque pedagógico fortaleciendo vínculos e interacciones entre la enseñanza y el aprendizaje que emerge de trabajar con la IADT.* Este aporte se traduce en la propuesta de un salto cualitativo en la relación entre la construcción de las capacidades individuales (más ligadas al EP) y las colectivas (más ligadas a la IADT) en los territorios.

Con esto, la pregunta que guía al artículo y funciona como reto personal es: ¿Qué reflexiones pueden ser útiles para otros procesos o investigadores e investigadoras que quieran integrar la formación en la IADT?

## **Núcleos conceptuales y sus interacciones**

Como se marca en la Introducción, la IADT se ha integrado en Rafaela con un formato que no es igual al del País Vasco. Su mayor diferencia está en que la IADT, en principio, se integra a través de su complementariedad con el EP (con eje en la formación) en el marco de una definición sobre el desarrollo territorial vinculada a la construcción de capacidades como una estrategia central del cambio. Por tanto, es necesario describir brevemente las características de cada enfoque y sus sinergias.

### ***El Enfoque Pedagógico para el Desarrollo Territorial***

El EP es una perspectiva latinoamericana para entender la construcción del conocimiento dentro del desarrollo territorial con un primer eje en la formación, que, a su vez tiene una trayectoria con múltiples influencias. Una de ellas deviene del ámbito de lo económico territorial. En los años noventa del siglo pasado y principios del 2000 la mirada se construye, entre otros, desde conceptos ligados al progreso técnico de los sistemas industriales generados desde la Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL) y de la producción de una serie de autores de referencia en esta región como Francisco Albuquerque (1997, 1999, 2008), José Arocena (1995, 1998), Sergio Boisier (1999, 2004), Oscar Madoery (2005, 2008), entre otros. También es parte de la implementación de programas de apoyo al desa-

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<sup>2</sup> El Instituto Praxis tiene la misión de profundizar la investigación y ampliar conocimientos en el desarrollo territorial impulsando una investigación social vinculada a la construcción colectiva en estrecha relación con la Maestría en Desarrollo Territorial. <http://mdt.frra.utn.edu.ar/web/> Las Áreas de trabajo son: Sistematización de Experiencias, Acompañamiento desde la Investigación Acción, Investigaciones de base, Formación, Sistemas de Información y el Área de Redes. Comparte la estructura administrativa y de dirección con la Maestría en DT.



rollo productivo del BID-FOMIN, como empresas, redes y cadenas, de los debates de la Red de Desarrollo Territorial de América Latina y El Caribe (RED DETE ALC) y de la praxis de una importante cantidad de formadores, que van orientados hacia miradas más sistémicas y multidisciplinarias (Costamagna 2015, Costamagna y Larrea 2017).

En este marco, el EP plantea una revisión de las relaciones entre actores con el territorio y se define como **«una forma de entender y actuar en la construcción de procesos de aprendizaje para el cambio en el territorio, de forma coherente con una construcción social y política»** (Costamagna, P., Spinelli, E. y Pérez, R; 2013, pág. 5). El EP supone un modo de comprender la vinculación teoría-práctica; el reconocimiento del otro (saberes locales, prácticas y experiencias); la vinculación y construcción basada en el diálogo y la resolución de conflictos promoviendo instancias democráticas

Esta mirada, muy influenciada por Freire y las pedagogías críticas, permitió cambios en nuestras maneras de pensar y hacer el DT. Resultado de estas reflexiones, aportes y aprendizajes enunciamos, a modo de síntesis, los elementos del EP (Costamagna y Larrea, 2015).

- Evolución de la formación tradicional al concepto de praxis.
- La construcción de capacidades en el desarrollo territorial como objetivo.
- Asumir la no neutralidad del formador.
- Trabajar en un proceso de cogeneración.
- Integrar la relación con el entorno de los procesos formativos, la importancia del contexto.
- Incorporar la comunicación y sistematización de los procesos.
- Sumar el debate sobre las personas que forman, facilitan y tienen conocimiento experto.

### *La investigación acción para el desarrollo territorial*

A través de la colaboración entre investigadores involucrados en el desarrollo de ambas perspectivas, en este proceso de construcción, reflexión y cambio del EP comienza un diálogo activo con la IADT, tomando como punto de partida los principios básicos de la Investigación Acción para el Desarrollo Territorial (IADT) que son los siguientes (Costamagna, Larrea 2015):

- Conexión entre investigación acción y el desarrollo territorial.
- Enfoque pragmatista.
- Reivindicación del investigador social como actor generador de cambio.
- Interpretación del conflicto como situación natural en el desarrollo territorial.
- Orientación hacia la construcción de conocimiento colectivo en la acción.
- Ausencia de neutralidad de los investigadores.
- Interpretación del diálogo como proceso básico del desarrollo territorial y el ágora como espacio de diálogo.

En este camino de múltiples interacciones, la IADT aportó al EP ayuda en la mirada de futuro, agregando la posibilidad de trabajar con los actores en problemas a mediano y largo plazo. Además, le suma la idea de fortalecer las capacidades colectivas para el cambio y, fortalece el concepto de diálogo. La investigación acción revaloriza a este último desde el concepto de ágora, definido por Karlsen y Larrea (2015) como el espacio donde la ciencia habla al público y el público responde a la ciencia.

En cuanto a las influencias del EP en la IADT, la primera se refleja en el propio nombre al sumar el concepto de DT. La literatura que sirve como punto de partida a la IADT es la que trata sobre sistemas regionales de innovación, pero toma dos definiciones muy vinculadas

a la reflexión que se realizaba en América Latina. La primera es la del desarrollo territorial como un proceso de construcción (y fortalecimiento) de capacidades con el objetivo de mejorar el bienestar económico de una comunidad de forma colectiva y continuada (Albuquerque, F., Costamagna, P., Ferraro, C., 2008). La segunda es la del desarrollo territorial como el proceso de movilización y participación de los actores (Albuquerque, 2012).

Otra influencia del EP es que la IADT incorpora la formación con más fuerza y suma las figuras de la persona formadora y la persona experta como parte de estos procesos de cambio, agregando la posibilidad de trabajar sobre las capacidades individuales.

Finalmente, hay una idea que relaciona íntimamente estas dos perspectivas y fundamenta la influencia mutua: ambas pueden considerarse estrategias de construcción de capacidades para el desarrollo territorial. El objetivo último del EP se expresa explícitamente en términos de construcción de capacidades; mientras que el de la IADT se expresa a través de su concepto de conocimiento colectivo en la acción, planteado como una capacidad colectiva.

Es importante señalar que, escribimos bajo la idea de que las capacidades individuales se adquieren mediante los procesos de capacitación formales e informales y suponen que «esta capacitación mejora la posibilidad de ser agentes de cambio, que van a cuestionar las dinámicas existentes y proponer nuevas maneras o formas de hacer las cosas» (Girardo, C; Martínez Pellegrini, S; Salgado Locela; LH; Costamagna, P, 2016, pag. 236) Las capacidades colectivas, en cambio, trascienden las individuales, se configuran en la acción de grupos de actores/instituciones, y permiten obtener resultados sobre escenarios donde lo individual es insuficiente. No obstante, es necesario seguir reflexionando para incorporar, por ejemplo, la perspectiva de Amartya Sen, que profundiza sobre la capacidad real de las personas para ser o hacer algo y reflexiona sobre la libertad y el ejercicio de los derechos en combinación con reflexiones sobre la capacitación de agentes en un mundo de instituciones tradicionales bastantes inflexibles ante la innovación donde hay personas que deben luchar en situaciones de debilidad en los procesos de cambio.

Asimismo, es clave visibilizar que si bien, nuestra práctica y nuestro relato en muchos casos se fragmenta entre las capacidades individuales por un lado y la colectiva por otra, siempre hay relaciones, en procesos concretos colectivos, el individuo se está desarrollando, aprendiendo y viceversa. La búsqueda de una mirada con nuevas combinaciones nos lleva a trabajar en este capítulo y visibilizar sobre cómo se retroalimentan estas capacidades.

### *Otras influencias en el proceso de construcción de capacidades*

En este camino es importante nuevamente referenciar a Paulo Freire como uno de los autores latinoamericanos que más sustento da al proceso. Sus ideas de trabajar juntos formación e investigación para la transformación, nos otorga el marco teórico: «No hay palabra verdadera que no sea unión inquebrantable entre acción y reflexión y, por ende, que no sea praxis. De ahí que decir la palabra verdadera sea transformar el mundo.» (Freire, P, 2012, p. 97) El mismo autor plantea «Mientras enseño continuo buscando, indagando. Enseño porque busco, porque indagué, porque indago y me indago. Investigo para comprobar, comprobando intervengo, interviniendo educo y me educo. Investigo para conocer lo que aún no conozco y comunicar o anunciar la novedad» (Freire 1997 p. 14). Da fuerza en la integración entre formación e investigación cuando expresa, «no hay enseñanza sin investigación ni investigación sin enseñanza» (Freire 1997 p. 14).

Estas ideas se conectan con otros pensamientos presentes en América Latina que no se ubican en el centro del discurso ni en la práctica hegemónica, como las epistemologías

del sur, con aproximaciones a la educación y a los procesos sociales. En éstos se resignifica cómo nos relacionamos con el mundo, cuál es el lugar del otro y la otra, cómo se construyen aprendizajes, profundizamos la democracia y trabajamos con un mayor respeto a las diversidades culturales y en una relación distinta de las personas con la naturaleza.

Además, está presente la complejidad que ya veníamos tratando en Costamagna y Lareira (2017) en términos de la existencia de varios factores que influyen en los territorios: las personas actuando con autonomía, flujos, incertidumbre, procesos emergentes y la asunción de que en un sistema, el todo es más que la suma de las partes, entre otros elementos.

Además, tal cual lo plantea la inmensa obra de Edgar Morín (1984, 2000, 2002), el pensamiento complejo propone abordar el conocimiento de la realidad de manera multidisciplinaria y multirreferenciada y expresa un análisis muy crítico de los análisis simplistas, lineales y no conectados. Claramente, la práctica de dividir investigación y formación o dividir la universidad en departamentos estancos o dividir sociedad y universidad no se lleva bien con este planteo porque no es capaz de producir acciones significativas de cambio.

Con estas ideas sobre la educación, los procesos sociales, lo multidimensional y la integración de formación e investigación, entramos en el caso.

## **Rafaela, un espacio para la integración de enfoques**

Este apartado tiene como objetivo ilustrar el proceso en Rafaela, con la idea de ir integrando enfoques desde la formación y desde la investigación acción.

### *La etapa inicial de consolidación del enfoque pedagógico*

La Universidad Tecnológica Nacional, Facultad Regional Rafaela, en alianza con instituciones de la ciudad, plantea la necesidad de un nuevo espacio formativo para responder a los nuevos desafíos de la región. En 2009 se pone en marcha la Maestría, que a inicios del 2019 comienza su quinta edición (dos años de duración por grupo) con la aprobación de la Comisión Nacional de Evaluación Educativa del Ministerio de Educación, pasando por las aulas alrededor de 125 personas provenientes de diversos espacios institucionales de Rafaela, de la región y también de otras regiones de Argentina, Uruguay y Colombia con profesores nacionales y extranjeros.<sup>3</sup>

La Maestría, en el marco del enfoque pedagógico para el desarrollo territorial promovió, mientras aprendía de su propio proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje:

- El análisis de casos con presencia de actores de distintas organizaciones.
- La realización de investigaciones para luego reflexionar sobre políticas.
- Trabajos de alumnos y alumnas en artículos periodísticos para estimular el debate en la región.
- La participación, desde la coordinación de la Maestría, en espacios de concertación estratégica, apostando a una relación universidad-territorio donde el conocimiento no está solo supeditado a lo que se aprende en el aula (Maestría en Desarrollo Territorial, 2013/2014).

<sup>3</sup> Página web de la Maestría en Desarrollo Territorial. UTN FRRA <http://mdt.frra.utn.edu.ar/web/>

En esta primera etapa no se trabaja desde la IADT, aunque paralelamente se comenzaba a consolidar la relación con Orkestra y a realizar acciones en conjunto.

En agosto de 2014, se crea el Instituto Praxis, por la Resolución 234 del Consejo Directivo de la Facultad Regional Rafaela de la Universidad Tecnología Nacional. Su objetivo inicial fue construir un espacio de análisis e investigación para favorecer la innovación en el desarrollo territorial de la región con una reflexión académica compartida con otros centros y agentes que participan del desarrollo. En los objetivos específicos se plantea: reflexionar sobre la complejidad y los territorios; generar conocimientos para el cambio a partir de la interacción con entorno territorial y sus instituciones, entre otros.

En este sentido, el Decano de la Facultad, Ing. Oscar David detallaba en la Memoria de la Maestría -2013/2014, pág. 3.: «la Facultad Regional Rafaela redobla su apuesta con la -creación del Instituto de Investigaciones Tecnológicas y Sociales para el Desarrollo Territorial (Praxis), como un ámbito institucional para complementar a la Maestría, mediante reflexiones académicas compartidas con actores de los territorios». Es el resultado de entender formación e investigación en un mismo camino.

En la memoria del Praxis del año 2015 planteábamos que ciertas acciones impulsadas desde el ámbito académico permitieron un stock de conocimiento desde la práctica que excedía el rol de la Maestría y que esto nos ponía en la necesidad de avanzar en un espacio específico dedicado a la investigación con mecanismos que generen retroalimentación entre la comunidad y el conocimiento. Mientras enseño, investigo, educo, me educo.

En dicho documento pudimos presentar con el equipo, por primera vez, el Área de Sistematización del instituto y se la definía como una herramienta de investigación y formación de relevancia para muchas disciplinas. En particular, en relación con el EP, se señalaba que «el conocimiento en el DT» no es exclusivo de los ámbitos académicos, hay experiencias y saberes producidos desde las prácticas que se pueden plantear como ejercicios de construcción colectiva de conocimiento haciendo apuestas participativas y horizontales al fortalecimiento de capacidades. (Costamagna *et al.* 2013 p. 7) En el área de sistematización se revaloriza el concepto de *praxis* en el territorio.

### ***La influencia de la IADT***

La influencia de Orkestra fue importante en la creación del Instituto; y en esa lógica se crea un Área de Acompañamiento desde la investigación acción para el desarrollo territorial, donde se definía que «el acompañamiento desde la perspectiva de la investigación acción consiste en promover instancias de reflexión participativa en procesos generados a partir de acciones, programas y políticas para el desarrollo territorial. Este ejercicio grupal es propuesto por los investigadores y se orienta a valorar y potenciar capacidades existentes y construir nuevos conocimientos compartidos por el conjunto de los actores intervinientes» (Rebola, R., 2019, p. 331).

Los valores de esta metodología, en consonancia con elementos presentes en la IADT y planteados en Karslen y Larrea (2015), son: la construcción colectiva, la apuesta por espacios de diálogo (ágoras), la aproximación interdisciplinaria, el respeto por los intereses e intenciones de los miembros, grupos y/o comunidades involucradas. En este sentido, los aprendizajes que se generan a partir de los acompañamientos son un aporte a la reflexión, tanto de quienes forman parte del proceso como de la comunidad académica vinculada al desarrollo territorial. Investigamos co-construyendo, pero también volvemos al aula para compartir conocimiento.

Las líneas de acción del Área de Acompañamiento desde la IA descritas en la memoria de Praxis (2016) fueron dirigidas, entre otras: al desarrollo del Plan Rafaela Productiva 2020, con un trabajo conjunto con la agencia de desarrollo y el equipo responsable del plan; a la construcción de un esquema de trabajo de una problemática social referida a adolescentes

que trabajan en la calle junto a un equipo de trabajo de la Municipalidad y a la facilitación del Consejo Consultivo Social de Rafaela<sup>4</sup>.

En la misma época, comienzan tesis que incorporan en su metodología a la IADT y, además, se produce otro salto donde queremos poner énfasis porque es un hito del proceso: junto con la tercera cohorte de alumnos de la Maestría (años 2015-2016) planteamos un ejercicio denominado Taller de Sistematización de Experiencias. La sistematización empezaba a ser una estrategia/herramienta de investigación que se trabajaba en el seno del proceso formativo. La sistematización, al trabajar en procesos sociales, aborda la construcción colectiva y los y las estudiantes que vienen de un ejercicio más individual en el aula se suman a procesos interactivos. El EP plantea como necesaria la reflexión con experiencias y actores en un determinado contexto y cuyo objetivo es: reflexionar sobre la experiencia, comprenderla, significarla y aprender de ella.

### ***La integración del enfoque pedagógico y la investigación acción para el desarrollo territorial***

En el año 2016, un grupo de alumnas que trabajaban en la Municipalidad de Rafaela (Amalia Galanti, María Eugenia Padrón y Lorena Culasso), deciden, con el profesor y la profesora del taller de sistematización, avanzar con un proceso de IADT. Esta decisión fue importante en términos del proceso global. Una vez terminada la versión histórica de su experiencia, plantearon tal cual recomendaba la IADT definir con los actores una problemática y avanzar un camino colectivo. Esa definición y sus nuevas lecturas de Freire abrieron un camino para la acción participativa hacia adelante. Los estudiantes aprenden, investigan y avanzan con un proceso de co-construcción hacia el cambio.

Ese trabajo, sumado a reflexiones realizadas junto a Orkestra y a los propios aprendizajes del taller de sistematización, permitió plantear un cambio en el programa de la Maestría en los módulos de metodología de la investigación. El Consejo Superior de la Universidad aprobó un módulo que pasó a denominarse Tesis y Práctica Profesional, que incorpora dos talleres de reflexión sobre praxis para el desarrollo territorial y que se suman a los tradicionales seminarios sobre metodología de la investigación y tesis (Ord. N.º 1569).

Con aprendizajes provenientes de las tesis, el taller de praxis en la Maestría, los acompañamientos y los distintos diálogos entre investigadores se fue fortaleciendo a una nueva etapa abierta a nuevas combinaciones del EP y la IADT, a partir de relacionar las formaciones individuales y el fortalecimiento de las capacidades colectivas.

En el medio de estas acciones, cabe agregar un ejercicio importante que hicimos junto a Miren Larrea cuando escribimos el libro *Actores facilitadores del desarrollo territorial. Una aproximación desde la construcción social* (Costamagna, P y Larrea, M, 2017) que marcan la explicitación —para nosotros— de la figura del facilitador en el desarrollo territorial que trabaja desde la praxis en los procesos de construcción de capacidades, constituyendo un rol que es clave para el EP y la IADT.

En el 2018, desde Praxis, sumamos un proceso de acompañamiento a la Comuna de Ramona, ciudad muy cercana a Rafaela, para trabajar temas de desarrollo y que venía, en principio, más ligado a la formación, pero incorpora la IADT a partir de la definición participativa de prioridades para luego abordar cambios de manera colectiva. Se visualiza con los actores la necesidad de ir combinando lo individual de la formación con lo colectivo del acompañamiento. Se decide asumir este proceso junto el grupo de alumnos que estaban cursando la cohorte 2017-2018 y continúa en el 2019 y se convierte en un buen ejemplo de la integra-

<sup>4</sup> Los resultados de estos procesos se pueden encontrar en diversas publicaciones en <http://mdt.frra.utn.edu.ar/web/>

ción entre EP e IADT, porque esos alumnos y alumnas trabajaron sistematizaciones sobre los procesos de IADT con nuevos aprendizajes para los actores locales y la propia academia.

En 2019 seguimos abordando las problemáticas priorizadas en 2018, y se inicia un proceso vinculado al desarrollo de emprendedores locales, más desde la lógica de la formación, con el fin de revincular al proceso de desarrollo territorial a los actores económico-productivos de la comunidad de Ramona. Además, hay una tesis empezada y varias instancias de diálogos en el aula, con participación de actores de ese territorio. Se han presentado, asimismo, reflexiones sobre este caso en diferentes congresos y sus resultados deben seguir siendo evaluados.

El taller de praxis de la Maestría hoy trabaja distinto, es un ámbito formativo, pero le dedicamos un año a trabajar la vinculación entre sistematización e IADT. Los alumnos dialogan con actores e impulsan procesos colectivos fuera del aula; es un gran desafío para ellos y para los profesores.

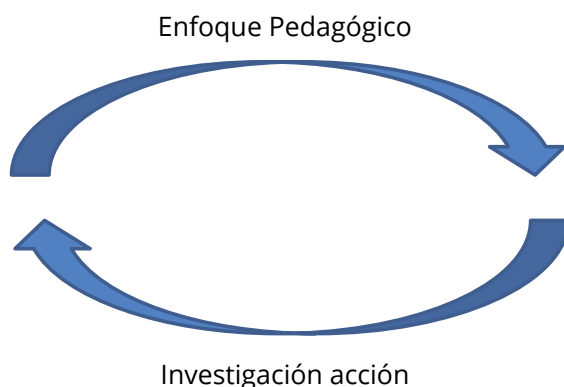
La Maestría sigue cambiando y hay más presencia de investigadores e investigadoras en todos los módulos, se suman nuevos acompañamientos que ya nacen de la interacción entre investigación y formación, en las reuniones del Instituto comienzan a tener presencia alumnos y alumnas; se comienza una nueva sistematización para reflexionar sobre las políticas públicas y, para el 2020 se diseñan acciones que complementen formación e investigación. Empieza a tomarse una sana costumbre, una mirada integradora entre el EP y la IADT.

### **Propuesta de un marco integrador del Enfoque Pedagógico y la Investigación Acción para el Desarrollo Territorial**

Partiendo de la experiencia descrita en la sección anterior, en que el EP y la IADT se han fusionado en la práctica, realizo a continuación una propuesta conceptual que puede ayudar a fortalecer el equilibrio entre formación e investigación, entre capacidades individuales y colectivas en el marco de la IADT.

La primera reflexión en la construcción de este marco integrador es que las fortalezas de cada enfoque coinciden con las debilidades del otro y que su mutua alimentación, en el marco de una estrategia de construcción de capacidades, impulsa el desarrollo territorial. Esta manera integrada de abordar el desarrollo territorial responde mejor a la complejidad que cada marco por su lado.

**Figura 1. Complementariedad entre el enfoque pedagógico y la investigación acción**



Las reflexiones de partida sobre los dos enfoques se sistematizan en la figura 2:

**Figura 2. Reflexiones sobre la complementariedad del enfoque pedagógico y la investigación acción**

	IA: Orientación a la resolución de problemas compartidos mediante la investigación	EP: Orientación a la construcción de una base de capacidades en el territorio a través de la formación
Construcción de capacidades individuales	Queda frecuentemente relegada	Fortaleza del EP por su orientación a la formación basada en la experiencia de cada participante
Construcción de capacidades colectivas	Fortaleza de la IA por su orientación a resolver problemas compartidos de forma colaborativa	Resulta difícil hacerlo desde la praxis al no orientarse a resolver un problema compartido

Partiendo de las reflexiones anteriores, propongo como marco integrador el de la Figura 3, en que se incorpora, de forma explícita el papel de las personas facilitadoras. Son estas personas (o el equipo de personas y sus capacidades) las que hacen que las cosas sucedan en esa idea integradora.

**Figura 3. Modelo conceptual sobre la integración del enfoque pedagógico y la investigación acción**



Fuente: elaboración propia.

La Figura 3 muestra los elementos principales del modelo integrado:

- Un proceso que se retroalimenta entre formación e investigación, cuyo objetivo central es la construcción de capacidades en procesos de cambio.
- Los procesos de formación, tanto en espacios formales e informales y su conexión con el trabajo sobre las capacidades colectivas.
- El avance con procesos de IADT con actores, investigadores y alumnos que interactúan co-construyendo sobre el futuro, haciendo énfasis en capacidades colectivas pero, a su vez, conectando con la formación de capacidades individuales.
- Las figuras de docentes e investigadores que juegan el rol de facilitadores en estos procesos; son quienes buscan crear condiciones para la reflexión, formación e investigación de manera integrada.

- Los procesos de cambio, representados en el centro del marco, es el espacio donde se crean los cambios en interacción con los actores, enriqueciendo individuos y comunidad.

Este marco, que emerge de los aprendizajes en Rafaela, es la contribución desde el EP al enriquecimiento de la IADT.

## Reflexiones finales

Mi búsqueda a lo largo de este capítulo ha sido explicitar los aprendizajes obtenidos en la conexión entre el EP y la IADT en el proceso formativo de la Maestría junto con Praxis. Pasamos, de no trabajar con la investigación acción, a hacerlo en forma complementaria a la formación y, en la actualidad, a avanzar en la integración de ambas perspectivas. En este camino emerge un proceso de deconstrucción sobre nuestra práctica, que dividía formación e investigación.

Retomo ahora la pregunta planteada en la introducción: ¿Cómo puede la IADT mejorar su aproximación al desarrollo de capacidades individuales conectadas a las capacidades colectivas que ya trabaja?

Un aspecto importante es integrar los procesos formativos en la IADT y visualizar el abordaje conjunto en estos procesos con la investigación. Estos procesos tienen, muchas veces, límites difusos y una gran limitación en las estructuras actuales de la Universidad. Esto requiere que quienes investigan amplíen el enfoque hacia una práctica más integradora, más vinculada al concepto de complejidad que, en algunos espacios, significa un cambio de paradigma en el que es importante que estén presentes los alumnos y las alumnas. En el marco de los cuatro territorios en que se está desarrollando la IADT (ver capítulo introductorio) este enfoque se trabaja tanto en Agder (Noruega) como en Tierra del Fuego (Argentina) y aun no se ha desarrollado en el País Vasco.

El desafío es estar atento a las demandas del territorio, porque no siempre son explícitas. Si vamos con una sola mirada, haremos aportes solo en ese sentido. En nuestro caso, los acompañamientos desde la IADT, aun enfocándose en la construcción de capacidades colectivas, han ido generando la necesidad de fortalecer (desde la formación) las capacidades individuales porque van siendo requeridas por los actores o por la lectura del proceso.

Los procesos formativos han requerido también momentos para estudiar nuevos temas, reflexionar sobre ideas o conceptos, leer sobre casos y, para ello, ha sido necesario compartir tiempo en espacios formativos y luego, desde ahí, co-construir soluciones. De esta manera se ha profundizado en la relación entre la teoría y la práctica.

Asimismo, es clave visibilizar a las personas (y los equipos) que impulsan estos procesos y la necesidad de reflexionar sobre la praxis. Para eso retomamos el concepto de facilitadores donde el Investigador/formador toma decisiones vinculadas con la metodología de sus procesos de investigación para abrir el camino y generar, desde la propia labor investigadora y formativa, las condiciones para este enfoque de gestión integrada.

Es importante señalar que nos estamos obligando a un nuevo rol del instituto de investigación, del docente y del investigador. En la actualidad, este rol no está en la genética del sistema educativo y de investigación y tampoco se visualiza en el sistema de incentivos y en las carreras de docentes e investigadores. Nos interpela a diálogos institucionales que contienen una dimensión política del cambio. En estos diálogos, no alcanza con la buena voluntad para que las instituciones puedan evolucionar y hacer cambios.

Es necesario contribuir desde la universidad a generar condiciones mínimas y ayudar al docente en el marco del debate sobre qué Universidad queremos. Algunos de los elementos



a tener en cuenta son la formación de docentes e investigadores, el debate epistemológico y la flexibilidad para que lo pedagógico se adapte a los tiempos de los actores. También es necesario dedicar tiempo al diálogo con los y las alumnas que están acostumbrados a dividir contenidos y aproximaciones más que a integrar y cuando realizan prácticas de investigación, lo hacen, en general como observadores y no facilitadores.

Nuestra experiencia comienza a mostrar los beneficios en la resolución de problemas en forma compartida, en el acercamiento de la universidad al territorio y en la visibilización de nuevas fórmulas investigativas. Las reflexiones nos marcan, también, desafíos como la necesaria inclusión de cuestiones de género que conlleven cambios más inclusivos o la necesidad de mejorar los modos de evaluar entre alumnos, docentes e investigadores.

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## Capítulo Corto 4

# Diálogos para el cambio. La investigación acción participativa como partera en el desarrollo territorial y las transformaciones

María Teresa Castillo Burguete<sup>1</sup>

### Laburpena

*Eraldaketarako dialogoak. Ikerketa ekintza parte hartzailea emagin lez lurralde garapenean eta eraldaketan*

*Ikerketa ekintza parte hartzaileak berezkoa du, ikerketa prozesuen bidez, gizabanakoek eta herriek guztien onerako nahi dituzten eraldaketak —eta horretarako behar diren ekintzak— bideratzeko behar den jakintza sortzeko gaitasuna. Dialogoa jaio dadin laguntzen duen emagina da, prozesuak garatu eta parte hartzaileen buru eta bihotzak eraldatzeko. Hauxe gertatu da Pablo, Praxis Institutua eta neure artean. Esperientzia honek Latinoamerikako berezitasunak dituzten lurralde garapenerako ikuspegi pedagogikoa eta ikerketa ekintza parte hartzailea lurraldearen eraldaketarako bide moduan balioesten lagundu digu. Kolektibo bilakatu den banakotasuna osagai izan da generoaren eta hizkuntza inklusioaren aztarnak izan dituen dialogoan ibiltzerakoan.*

### Resumen

*Diálogos para el cambio. La investigación acción participativa como partera en el desarrollo territorial y las transformaciones*

En la investigación acción participativa subyace la virtud para generar, a través de los procesos de investigación, los aprendizajes necesarios para implementar acciones y procurar las transformaciones que individuos y pueblos desean para el bien común. Es partera que ayuda para alumbrar diálogos, generar procesos y transformar mentes y corazón de los participantes. Es lo que ha sucedido en el diálogo que hemos tenido entre Pablo, del Instituto Praxis y yo. La experiencia nos ha llevado a apreciar la rica vena latinoamericana, el enfoque pedagógico para el Desarrollo Territorial y la Investigación Acción Participativa como vía para la transformación del territorio. La individualidad colectivizada ha sido ingrediente para fluir en un diálogo que tuvo la impronta genérica e inclusión lingüística.

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## Diálogos para el cambio. La investigación acción participativa como partera en el desarrollo territorial y las transformaciones

Generar cambios suele ser un sueño en la mente y corazón de tantos y tantos seres inmersos en la creación colectiva, en el crecimiento individual en un entorno creativo para la mejora comunitaria. Partir de la creación comunitaria puede llevarnos a plantear cómo facilitar el proceso de crear con la participación de todos los involucrados. Ese es justamente el objetivo que se propusieron en el Instituto Praxis (UTN FRRA) donde Pablo participa, en Rafaela (Argentina), trabajando para construir capacidades individuales y colectivas, con enfoques integradores. En el proceso buscaron incidir en las capacidades de los participantes, reflexionando en un ámbito propiciado por la investigación acción, para el desarrollo territorial e iluminados por el enfoque pedagógico. En marzo de 2019 la creación comunitaria llamó a mi puerta en Chalmers University (Suecia), reunidos en la «Action Research+ Transformations Gathering». Miren Larrea entregó la invitación, se trataba de participar con Pablo en un diálogo sobre su experiencia en el Instituto Praxis. Acepté de inmediato. Surgió mi latinidad y afloró el maravilloso espíritu colaborativo que la investigación acción participativa siembra y ayuda para fructificar. Imposible dejar pasar un reto como el traído en la invitación. Tuvimos una sesión de Skype con Pablo, la empatía fue inmediata y celebramos la fiesta de andar caminos similares, el que la IAP ayuda a crear como comunidad.

Al conocer el proyecto y sus avances iniciamos el diálogo sobre lo que, entre los participantes, ha implicado trabajar en un espacio reglado por la educación formal: la Maestría en Desarrollo Territorial. En la formación docente incorporar la investigación como parte de la labor es oxígeno para los ámbitos individual y comunitario. Se trata de la construcción colectiva de conocimiento en la acción. Aquí subyace el principio de Orlando Fals Borda (1986) sobre investigar la realidad para transformarla. Estos elementos propiciaron que nuestro diálogo se diera en un plano de respeto y compañerismo, de crítica y propuesta. Es parte de mi quehacer como investigadora en ecología humana y docente en la maestría y el doctorado en esa área en México. Pablo y yo dialogamos vinculados por hacer investigación y docencia como parte de la acción para llegar a los aprendizajes multidireccionales, con las pedagogías de la investigación acción, y la participación como componente del núcleo que nutre la transformación.

Pablo comparte que, con el intercambio dado entre los participantes en los procesos de Praxis y la maestría, los esfuerzos han implicado visitas de participantes del País Vasco y Noruega al grupo en Argentina y de éstos a Orkestra, participar en clases en el posgrado y en talleres. Se han concretado también en tesis doctorales, artículos y libros compartidos, y en la colaboración del «Desarrollo Territorial». Toda esta labor les ha llevado a mantener y fortalecer vínculos intercomunitarios, sosteniendo los aprendizajes en el tiempo.

El desarrollo territorial es abordado por James Karlsen y Miren Larrea (2014) en su libro, donde tienen como tesis principal que se construye a través del involucramiento de las personas que viven y trabajan en el territorio (pág. 1). Se aproximan en el área de intersección formada entre desarrollo territorial e investigación acción, porque les interesa analizar un componente crucial de conocimiento realizado de adentro hacia afuera; que es el proceso de creación. Esto resulta vital y, en procesos como el abordado en el Instituto Praxis (UTN FRRA), resulta sumamente importante conocer los microprocesos que acontecen en ese espacio territorial provisto de músculo, sangre, piel, cerebro, corazón, emociones, logros, retrocesos aparentes, avances que es trabajar con investigación acción; en el marco de la participación para la transformación. La gama individual, la llegada de cada integrante al

grupo, con la impronta de su historia que es única, nutre al colectivo al que se aproxima y el colectivo, a su vez, transforma a cada integrante. Es en el sentido de la indagación compleja expresada por Freire (1997), la realizada, que nutre la enseñanza en el presente, este tiempo que nos lleva a investigar para comprobar, la comprobación que a su vez nos lleva a intervenir y educar, la búsqueda de respuestas ante nuevas preguntas; que marca la indagación futura. Por ello la vena latinoamericana, tan rica y generosa, nutre la espiral del Enfoque Pedagógico para el Desarrollo Territorial y la Investigación Acción; que lleva a participar para transformar el territorio.

La impronta lingüística también se constituyó en crucial para nuestro diálogo. Hablamos y nos leemos en la lengua madre y construimos las expresiones para comunicar las experiencias a quienes leerán sobre nuestro andar. Compartir con otros lo obtenido podría hacerse de cualquier manera, pero no. Nuestros destinatarios son primordialmente lectores en nuestra lengua, para fomentar la apertura de los espacios de inclusión lingüística. Nos vincula a la celebración de la ruta colaborativa y la llegada del libro bilingüe *Cocinando la investigación acción historias y recursos para la transformación personal y comunitaria*, editado con Hilary Bradbury y Kamil Gerónimo (Bradbury, Gerónimo y Castillo, 2019). Ahí compartimos experiencias sobre investigación acción y, más aún, fue guisar desde México con colegas de Puerto Rico, Colombia, USA, Suecia, Guyana, Brasil, Costa Rica, Filipinas e Inglaterra.

Con Pablo el diálogo intergenérico también enriqueció nuestro trabajo. Somos colegas que hemos andado camino con miradas distintas, permeadas por el interés y sensibilidad que la construcción cultural genérica nos ha dado y, a la vez, tenemos intereses en común. Miramos distinto y, no obstante, dialogamos con palabras similares de respeto, inclusión, apertura y aprendizajes, porque los principios de la investigación acción alumbran el camino de nuestro diálogo. Así tendemos los puentes para juntar las preguntas, buscar las respuestas, construir otras nuevas y avanzar hacia este diálogo que requiere la búsqueda de saberes. Quizá las formas para dialogar y comunicar resultados que habitualmente hemos estado usando no son tan convenientes, por ello buscamos y encontramos otras enriquecedoras; como parte de la invitación que recibimos.

Señalé que generar cambios suele estar en los sueños, la mente y corazón de quienes estamos inmersos en la creación colectiva. Sabemos que, en el crecimiento individual, dado en un entorno creativo para la mejora comunitaria, está esa gama de nutrientes para la construcción colectiva. Es lo que hemos creado en el diálogo realizado con el Instituto Praxis, a través de la individualidad colectivizada de Pablo, y el afán de transformarnos para hacer un nosotros.

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## Post experiencial 4.1

# Desenvolvimento Territorial e Formação de Professores: conectando experiências a partir da investigação-ação

*Sandro de Castro Pitano*<sup>1</sup>

### **Resumen**

*Desarrollo territorial y formación de profesores. Conectando experiencias a partir de la investigación acción*

Comprometido con el desarrollo territorial, Pablo apuesta por las personas que viven el espacio a diario, alimentadas por sus demandas e intereses más auténticos, buscando integrar la capacitación (enfoque pedagógico) y la investigación acción. Esta opción, que es teórico-práctica y metodológica, se identifica con los principios que he asumido en mi vida profesional diaria, relacionados con la formación docente en el sur de Brasil. Las dimensiones individuales y colectivas del aprendizaje, así como la teoría y la práctica en la producción de conocimiento son inseparables, destacando la relevancia de buscar mejorar la experiencia a través de la investigación sobre este, en solidaridad con el conjunto de personas involucradas.

### **Abstract**

*Territorial development and teacher education: connecting experiences through action research*

Committed to territorial development, Pablo bets on people who live the space on a daily basis, nourished by their most authentic demands and interests, seeking to integrate training (pedagogical approach) and action research. This option, which is theoretical-practical and methodological, identifies with the principles that I have assumed in my professional daily life, involved with teacher education in southern Brazil. The individual and collective dimensions of learning, as well as theory and practice in the production of knowledge are inseparable, highlighting the relevance of seeking the improvement of experience through research on it, in solidarity with the group of people involved.

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Nômades em círculo de cultura no deserto do Quênia (1985).

O texto de Pablo Costamagna reflete o conjunto de ações implementadas por Pablo em torno do desenvolvimento territorial, conectando processos de aprendizagem com embasamento teórico e metodológico na investigação ação. Por se afirmar no lugar, o território é capaz de gerar princípios, não raro, estranhos à normatividade global, tais como a solidariedade que emerge do pertencimento e estimula o protagonismo dos sujeitos em seu próprio espaço. Pablo demonstra apostar nas pessoas que vivem o cotidiano territorial, nutridas de suas demandas e interesses mais autênticos. Nisso consiste o desafio descrito em seu texto, buscando integrar a formação (enfoque pedagógico) e a investigação ação para o desenvolvimento territorial. É por esse caminho que percebo um encontro com as opções e enfrentamentos que tenho assumido em meu contexto profissional, como professor e pesquisador. Opções que envolvem a articulação permanente entre as dimensões individual e coletiva da aprendizagem, assim como da teoria e da prática na produção do conhecimento.

Ao concordar com Freire (2002, p. 69), para quem os homens e as mulheres se educam em comunhão, mediatizados pelo mundo, percebe-se que essas dimensões são inseparáveis. Mesmo em processos tipicamente coletivos, o sujeito individual está em desenvolvimento, aprendendo com o individual dos outros sujeitos em movimento de partilha, como nos círculos de cultura (imagem). Neles, todos ensinam e todos aprendem em meio à interação e à diferença. Tenho percebido nas experiências de formação de professores no extremo sul do Brasil, que é fundamentalmente construtivo o movimento de buscar o aprimoramento da experiência por meio da investigação sobre ela, de maneira solidária com o conjunto de sujeitos envolvidos. Nesse movimento se destaca a produção de conhecimento concomitante à qualificação da prática, ou seja, a aprendizagem é resultado do fazer cotidiano, assumido como objeto pelo ato de pesquisar.

Pertencimento e protagonismo, juntamente com a solidariedade, emergem como princípios fundamentais, colocando em relevo a vivência no território e a intenção de nele interferir, no caso de Pablo e a busca pela autonomia no processo de construção profissional, no meu caso. E ambos, embora voltados para demandas locais, não se descolam de um horizonte mais amplo, cuja dimensão utópica compreende a consolidação processual de uma cultura participativa que estimule a modelagem do próprio contexto, tanto o territorial como o profissional. Compartilhar as experiências sistematizadas é um procedimento frutífero no que se refere ao conhecimento social e historicamente produzido. Ao compartilhar, promove-se um encontro



de saberes com sujeitos que passaram por experiências semelhantes, cujas próprias reflexões se encontram e consolidam a aprendizagem na dimensão coletiva. A partilha aproxima dúvidas, anseios e permite a elaboração de soluções mais complexas do que seriam alcançadas na esfera individual. Tanto no aprimoramento profissional como no desenvolvimento territorial.

A reflexão sobre a prática em educação e pesquisa participativa envolve construção da autonomia concomitante à construção e reconstrução do conhecimento, sem uma direção unilateral, normalmente imposta pelos pesquisadores. A dimensão participativa reduz essa possibilidade majoritariamente diretiva sem anular, contudo, o olhar qualificado que os pesquisadores possuem em relação ao fenômeno. Trata-se de uma concepção de pesquisa e de intervenção social que reflete a postura política e epistemológica de pesquisadores e pesquisadoras que a assumem em seu cotidiano laboral.

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## Post experiencial 4.2

# La formación en Sociología como práctica de investigación y transformación para el desarrollo territorial

María Albina Pol<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

*The training in sociology as practice of research and transformation for territorial development*

The proposal made in the chapter about the articulation between the *pedagogical approach* and *action research for territorial development* motivates this reflection on the teaching-learning practices that occur in the educational space where I participate in the graduate program in sociology in the Universidad Nacional de Cuyo (Mendoza, Argentina). I try to accept here the challenge of questioning myself about the development of strategies oriented to an educational process that can generate capabilities for research and transformation in dialogue with the territories and their actors.

### **Resumen**

*La formación en Sociología como práctica de investigación y transformación para el desarrollo territorial*

La propuesta expresada en el capítulo acerca de la articulación entre el *enfoque pedagógico* y la *investigación acción para el desarrollo territorial* motivan la reflexión sobre las prácticas de enseñanza aprendizaje que se despliegan en el espacio de formación del que formo parte, la Carrera de Sociología de la Universidad Nacional de Cuyo (Mendoza, Argentina). Intento abordar aquí el desafío de interrogarme sobre la puesta en juego de estrategias orientadas a una formación capaz de generar capacidades para la investigación y la transformación en diálogo con los territorios y sus actores.

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Enmarco las reflexiones expresadas en estas líneas en mi práctica como docente, investigadora y directora de la Carrera de Sociología de la Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales de la Universidad Nacional de Cuyo (Mendoza - Argentina)<sup>2</sup>. Las ideas del capítulo acerca del vínculo de complementariedad entre el Enfoque Pedagógico y la Investigación Acción para el Desarrollo Territorial me sugieren pensar en los mecanismos y estrategias actualmente puestos en juego en una carrera con una extensa tradición, fue creada en 1968 viéndose interrumpida entre los años 1976 y 1985 en el contexto de la dictadura militar argentina. En su trayectoria la carrera de sociología de la UNCuyo ha formado un importante número de profesionales críticos/as y comprometidos/as que desempeñan sus tareas en diferentes ámbitos —principalmente en organismos de investigación y otras instituciones del sector público—, estando muchos/as de ellos/as en estrecha interacción con los territorios en los que se despliegan los fenómenos que son foco de su interés. Aunque el academicismo sociológico (basado en determinadas concepciones de objetividad, distancia y purismo) aún perdura, van tomando cada vez mayor fuerza aquellas miradas que sostienen la importancia de la praxis sociológica. Es justamente en esa perspectiva en la que asentamos nuestra forma de concebir la formación en sociología.

Pensar a la carrera como espacio de enseñanza - aprendizaje, pero también de transformación, lleva a interrogarme acerca de ¿cómo la formación que ofrece nuestra carrera impulsa la construcción de capacidades —individuales y colectivas— para el Desarrollo Territorial? ¿En qué medida colabora en la formación de agentes capaces de establecer un diálogo con el territorio, poner en crisis las dinámicas y procesos existentes, proponer cambios y trabajar con otros/as? La Licenciatura en Sociología de la UNCuyo es una carrera de matrícula relativamente reducida, sus estudiantes activos/as cuentan alrededor de 250 y el plantel docente está actualmente conformado por 62 profesionales. Esas características han facilitado el despliegue, por parte del equipo de dirección, de un conjunto de instrumentos de seguimiento y evaluación de las acciones que se realizan dentro y fuera del aula.

El punto de partida que brinda el diagnóstico acerca de la carrera es el desarrollo de estrategias pedagógicas basadas en la fragmentación de saberes, en la escisión entre teoría y práctica, en la existencia de compartimentos estancos sustentados en dinámicas que muchas veces conllevan una relación jerárquica entre docentes y estudiantes y en las que los saberes «no académicos», así como las experiencias y conocimientos que los/as alumnos/as portan, ocupan un lugar subalterno. Un aspecto a favor en el actual escenario que presenta la carrera es la existencia de un cuerpo docente renovado generacionalmente, dispuesto a re-

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flexionar críticamente sobre sus prácticas y a implementar cambios basados en relaciones más horizontales y de mayor reconocimiento de la diversidad.

En la gestión que venimos desarrollando desde 2019 partimos de la convicción de que toda práctica sociológica es una práctica de investigación y que ello implica un compromiso de generación de conocimiento, pero también de transformación de las problemáticas que son objeto de interés de los/as sociólogos/as. La materialización de estas ideas se despliega hoy a través de esfuerzos por incorporar los componentes de vinculación y transferencia en la práctica investigativa, de los compromisos de militancia de docentes y estudiantes y de espacios pedagógicos específicos como son las Prácticas Socio Educativas y las Prácticas Profesionales (es la primera carrera de la UNCuyo y la primera carrera de Sociología del país en incorporar esos espacios curriculares dentro de su Plan de Estudios). A partir de ello, las nociones vinculadas a la articulación entre el EP y la IA para el DT que se proponen desde la experiencia de Rafaela, nos ayudan a orientar el desafío de avanzar en acciones colectivas que permitan fortalecer la interacción entre formación e investigación, reflexionar en torno al abordaje de fenómenos complejos desde miradas que conjuguen conocimientos teóricos y prácticos, articular el desarrollo de capacidades individuales y colectivas que apunten a poner en cuestión lo existente y a cogenerar conocimientos compartidos basados en el diálogo de saberes, prácticas y experiencias, procesos en los que el/la docente pueda cumplir un rol de facilitador/a.



## Chapter 5

# Students as territorial development actors: The importance of developing awareness

James Karlsen<sup>1</sup>

### Sammendrag

*Studenter som regionale utviklingsaktører: Nødvendigheten av å utvikle kritisk bevissthet i undervisningen*

Dette kapitlet introduserer studenter som en ny type regional aktør i diskursen om universitetets regionale rolle. Denne rollen er utviklet innenfor den retningen som innen aksjonsforskning kalles for «aksjonsforskning for territoriell utvikling». I rollen som regionale aktører er studentene aktive deltakere i regionale utviklingsprosesser sammen med andre regionale aktører. Aktiv deltakelse innebærer at studentene tar ansvar for å fasilitere og reflektere kritisk over regionale utviklingsprosesser som de deltar i.

Studenter som regionale aktører har ikke en fremtredende rolle i diskursen om universitetets regionale rolle. I den grad studentenes rolle diskuteres er det i forbindelse med undervisning og universitetets bestrebelser med å fylle studentene med kunnskap gjennom forelesninger som dominerende undervisningsform. Argumentet i dette kapitlet er inspirert av den Brasilianske pedagogen Paulo Freire og hans begrep «Conscientização» som er et portugisisk ord som på norsk kan oversettes til «kritisk bevisstgjøring» og på engelsk til «awareness». Begrepet betyr å bli bevisstgjort sin egen verdi og hvilken rolle en som individ spiller i den virkeligheten en lever i. En kan si at begrepet handler om å endre seg fra å «være» til «å være med». Gjennom å være med som deltakere kan studentenes kritiske bevissthet utvikles gjennom dialogbaserte undervisningsformer og samskaping i virkelige case sammen med regionale aktører. «Samskaping av kunnskap» er Universitetet i Agder sin visjon. I dette kurset er visjonen konkretisert som en metode for læring og utvikling av ny kunnskap basert på aksjonsforskning som metodologi. Argumentet er ikke bare en teoretisk refleksjon, men baserer seg på erfaringer fra et emne som omhandler Innovasjon i offentlig sektor i masterprogrammet Innovasjon og kunnskapsutvikling ved Universitetet i Agder. Emnet har vært gitt siden høsten 2017. I emnet har studentene samarbeidet med regionale aktører som Grimstad kommune, Grimstad Næringsforening og Arendal kommune.

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For at studentene skal kunne opptre som regionale aktører, er det flere betingelser som må være tilstede. Det er blant annet nødvendig å utvikle studentenes kritiske bevissthet gjennom en kombinasjon av forelesninger og dialog basert undervisning. Utfordringen er å endre studentenes mentale innstilling fra å motta informasjon til selv å skape kunnskap i fellesskap. I kapitlet vises det til retningslinjer som studentene selv skapte om hvordan de skulle samskape kunnskap med regionale aktører i det caset som de jobbet med. Dermed må det være institusjonelle betingelser som muliggjør det å jobbe med alternative undervisningsformer til den klassiske forelesningen. Eksempel på institusjonelle betingelser er visjonen om «samskaping av kunnskap» og at det er en kultur for å samarbeide med regionale aktører både gjennom undervisning og forskning. I caset vises det til det er etablert en kultur for samarbeid med næringslivet.

## Resumen

### *Los estudiantes como actores del desarrollo territorial: la necesidad de generar una conciencia crítica en la enseñanza*

Este capítulo presenta a los estudiantes como un nuevo tipo de actor territorial en el discurso sobre el papel regional de la universidad. Se trata de una contribución gestada en el marco de la *investigación acción para el desarrollo territorial*. En su papel de actores territoriales, los estudiantes son participantes activos en los procesos de desarrollo territorial junto con otros actores y asumen tanto la responsabilidad de facilitar los procesos de desarrollo territorial en los que participan y como la de reflexionar críticamente sobre los mismos.

Los estudiantes como actores territoriales no tienen un papel destacado en el discurso sobre el papel regional de la universidad. Cuando se habla de ellos, es normalmente en relación con procesos de enseñanza en los que los esfuerzos de la universidad están orientados a «llenar» a los estudiantes de conocimiento a través de clases magistrales, las cuales son la forma dominante de enseñanza. Los argumentos de este capítulo plantean una visión alternativa, inspirada en el educador brasileño Paulo Freire y su término «Conscientização» (concientización), que es una palabra portuguesa que podemos traducir como generación de conciencia crítica. El término significa tomar, cada uno, conciencia de su propio valor y el papel que uno juega como individuo en la realidad en la que vive. Al ser participantes, la conciencia crítica de los estudiantes se desarrolla a través de la enseñanza basada en el diálogo y la colaboración en situaciones de la vida real compartidas con otros actores territoriales. La visión de la Universidad de Agder es «Samskaping av kunnskap», o co-construcción del conocimiento. En el capítulo esta visión se concreta en una metodología para aprender y desarrollar nuevos conocimientos basada en la investigación acción. Los argumentos del capítulo no son solo una reflexión teórica, sino que se basan en la experiencia en una asignatura sobre Innovación en el Sector Público en el programa de maestría Innovación y Desarrollo del Conocimiento de la Universidad de Agder. La asignatura se ha impartido desde el otoño de 2017. En la misma, los estudiantes han colaborado con actores territoriales como la municipalidad de Grimstad, la asociación empresarial de Grimstad y la municipalidad de Arendal.

Para que los estudiantes puedan actuar como actores territoriales, hay varias condiciones que deben cumplirse. Entre otras cosas, es necesario desarrollar la conciencia crítica de los estudiantes a través de una combinación de conferencias y enseñanza basada en el diálogo. El desafío es cambiar del esquema mental relativo al aprendizaje basado en la recepción de información a un esquema en que ellos mismos crean conocimiento. El capítulo comparte las pautas que los propios estudiantes crearon sobre cómo co-construir conocimiento con los actores territoriales en el contexto real en el que trabajaron. En segundo lugar, debe haber condiciones institucionales que permitan trabajar con métodos de enseñanza alternativos a las clases magistrales clásicas. Son ejemplos de condiciones institucionales la visión que se tenga en la universidad sobre cómo se intercambia el conocimiento o que exista una cultura de colaboración con actores territoriales tanto a través de la enseñanza como de la investigación. En el caso discutido en el capítulo, se hace referencia al establecimiento de una cultura de cooperación con las empresas y la industria.



# Students as territorial development actors: The importance of developing awareness

## Introduction

In this chapter, I continue discussing the development of action research for territorial development (ARTD) by introducing new actors: students. ARTD claims that action researchers—rather than just stakeholders in action research processes—are territorial actors. I develop this idea further to argue that, in the context of their educational processes, students are also territorial actors. Being recognised as territorial actors means that students, in their educational processes, are not merely observers of territorial development but can be active participants by facilitating the reflections and actions of territorial stakeholders. The rationale put forward in this chapter is that action research can be a vehicle for students to take up this role when they are accompanied by their supervisors and work within the frameworks of their universities' collaborative processes with other organisations in a territory. Hereafter, when I refer to the role of students as territorial actors, I refer to this facilitative role framed by action research.

The inspiration for this chapter came from a course I have been teaching for three years now. To develop this course, we used lessons learned from Romano (2017), an action research project called Gipuzkoa Sarean, which was undertaken in the Basque Country, Spain, and EDWOR I, Norway (Greenwood & Levin, 2007), in which I myself participated, as a graduate. In short, ARTD is about *how* work is done in complex, territorial development processes in which no single actor has the power to determine the outcome of the process (see this book's introduction for a presentation of ARTD). One solution to such a situation is to co-generate knowledge through dialogue between territorial development actors while being aware that there might be many theoretical solutions; in praxis, however, actors have to reflect, make decisions and take action that can differ from the ideal theoretical solution. Also, the possibility exists that the theories turn out to be completely wrong, or that the dominant methods are useless in context. It is a two-way street.

As an action researcher, this approach to territorial development has inspired me to further develop the co-generation of knowledge as a concept in emergent strategies for change in universities and their regions, with students as territorial development actors. The course at the core of the action research case is a Master's course called *Innovation in the Public Sector* at the School of Business and Law of the University of Agder, a regional university located in the southernmost region of Norway. Thus, the foundation for this discussion is an action research case in which the role of territorial development was integrated into the teaching of the course. This is a new role developed over three years of practice and is inspired by Schön's (1983) reflections on action as well as concepts such as awareness (Freire, 1996), and the co-generation of knowledge (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). In the academic literature, this lies at the intersection of action research and discourse about the regional roles of universities.

The structure of the chapter is as follows: in the next section, the role of universities and students as territorial development actors are introduced. Then, key concepts are discussed, including the co-generation of knowledge and awareness, after which the context of the case is presented. The complexity of the knowledge co-generation process makes it hard to present it in full detail within the framework of a single chapter. The focus of the presentation is, therefore, on the critical phase of developing awareness among students as well as the results of this process. The chapter ends with a conclusion examining the broader lessons of the case.

## The role of universities and action research

Actors across Europe and in the broader world are challenging the idea that universities are knowledge institutions that engage in regional development (Dunning, 2002; Foray *et al.*, 2012; OECD, 2004, 2009). In the international discourse, this has been called “the third role”, “the third task” or “the regional role” (Laredo, 2007; Molas-Gallart & Castro-Martínez, 2007). The regional part of the third role can be described by concepts such as involvement, engagement and interaction with regional actors (Benneworth, Zeeman, Pinheiro, & Karlsen, 2017). The term *third role* is a logical consequence of the first two roles, which are teaching and research. This abstraction and simplification of universities’ missions down to three roles black boxes the complexity of universities as knowledge institutions, as well as their relationship to their host region and society in general. The macro approach in the discourse inadequately communicates the complexity of teaching, research and regional engagement. Secondly, it infers that there are three independent roles that have nothing to do with each other, as though they were independent systems that do not interact. Third, in the discourse, the emphasis is more on the economy, innovation and technology than soft activities and their potential for territorial development (Lucas, Cooper, Ward, & Cave, 2009). The fourth argument is that there is a lack of research on the practice of these roles, and especially their connection, carried out inside the process itself and outside in real time. Students, as territorial development actors, have roles that are not explicitly discussed in the discourse about their universities’ roles. In fact, students are discussed mostly in the context of teaching, and they are often seen as empty boxes that need to be filled with knowledge before they are allowed to enter working life (Freire, 1996). In this chapter, I want to highlight students as territorial development actors, which is a new type of actor in the discourse about the role of universities in territorial development. This resonates with the Morrill Act from the 19<sup>th</sup> century that was the beginning of US land-grant universities teaching, conducting research, and offering services to the people of the state they were located in (Greenwood & Levin, 2007).

There is extensive literature on educational action research that addresses methods educators can use to find solutions to the challenges they encounter during the educational process. But this is not my focus. When advocating for the recognition of students as territorial actors that interact with other actors through action research, I developed my contribution in the framework of ARTD and territorial development processes.

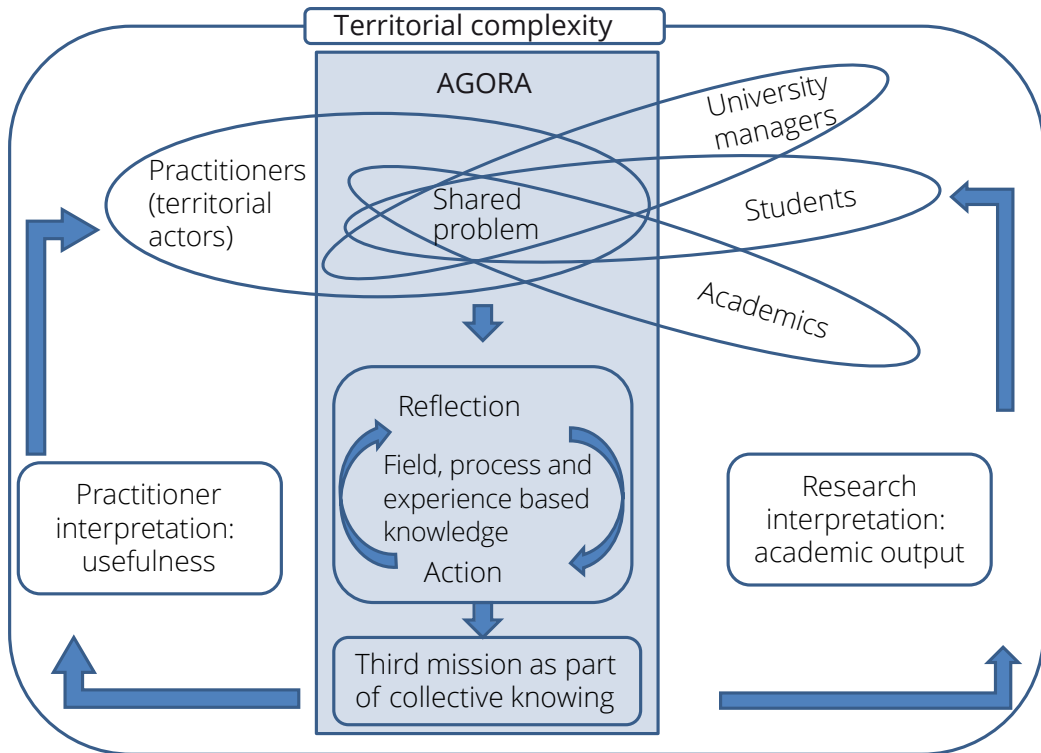
In this context, I approach action research as a pragmatic co-creation of knowledge *with* territorial actors, not *about* them (Bradbury, 2015). This approach connects the action research literature’s emphasis on social change (Greenwood & Levin, 2007) with the need to transform universities (Greenwood & Levin, 2016). In the literature, the role of students has been discussed by authors such as Freire (1996), with his pedagogical approach to liberating students’ learning potential, and Stenhouse (Stenhouse, 1975), who viewed teachers as researchers. Greenwood and Levin (2007) organised teaching so that students worked with real-life cases at the undergraduate, intermediate and PhD levels. At the first two levels, the most evident disconnection of teaching from an action research process was due to its lack of direct exposure to the field, while on the PhD level, there was more time available for co-generation processes with actors outside the classroom (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). In the specific context of ARTD, Romano (2017) also addressed the relevance of students as territorial actors.

## The importance of developing awareness

Co-generation of knowledge is a key concept in action research. The approach used in this chapter is inspired by collaborative learning (Elden & Levin, 1991), the co-generation of

knowledge (Greenwood & Levin, 2007), and the co-generation of knowledge in territorial development (Karlsen & Larrea, 2014). Co-generation is both a collective learning process and a process outcome, which can result in new academic knowledge and actionable knowledge for territorial development actors (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Students as territorial actors in co-generative processes**



Modified after J. Karlsen & Larrea, 2014, p. 100.

In this chapter, I will focus on co-generation as a learning process. Co-generation is a learning process in which new methods of co-generation are developed, and common challenges and solutions are considered and tested in practice. The basic idea is that learning processes can be systematised and structured in common arenas (agora), and through dialogue, reflection and action, the basis for learning and the changing of practices can be created. Co-generation is a highly complex process that does not necessarily follow a linear path. For analytical purposes, agora can be represented as different spaces for dialogue. Karlsen and Larrea (2014) differentiated between three spaces for dialogue: awareness, co-ordination and policy design, and dialogue regarding intervention. The three spaces overlap somewhat, which means that they influence each other.

To cultivate their capability to learn how to co-generate knowledge with practitioners, students must first develop awareness. Therefore, I will concentrate the discussion on students' awareness. More specifically, I will focus on a challenge that emerges in the first phase of the knowledge co-generation process: that of helping students develop an awareness of their role as territorial development actors.

As teachers dialogue with students, the classroom becomes a space of awareness. This space is important for linking dialogue, reflection, action and change. The change in attitude cannot start until the perceptions of the researchers and practitioners are unveiled and understood; they must see the need to change themselves in order to change the world (Karlsen & Larrea, 2014). This means that in playing their territorial actor roles, students need first to gain an awareness of their potential to transform the territory through their own transformation processes. Freire (1996), a Brazilian pedagogue, inspired the concept of awareness. The Portuguese word for "awareness" is "*conscientização*". To Freire, awareness is about more than becoming conscious. It is about becoming aware of the individual and the role the individual plays in society. Freire's concept of awareness is a reaction to the banking approach and the linearity of education in which teachers are actors with knowledge and the authority to deposit that knowledge in students. In such a situation, the role of students is to memorise the deposited knowledge. Furthermore, this linearity is not restricted to the classroom; rather, it is a general phenomenon in society. Researchers, politicians, and policymakers deposit knowledge in society in the belief that actors will change their attitudes upon receiving the message. One example of such a message is the well-known activity of planning.

Strategic planning, however, has not turned out to be such an efficient producer of success as the handbooks and consultants indicated... And, after all, when the time to make decisions comes, the strategy papers have been forgotten, the world has changed, "and now is not the time to make strategies, now is the time to balance next year's budget." (Sotarauta, 2004, p. 8)

The practice of depositing knowledge does not make knowledge actionable. Actionable knowledge is knowledge that is lived and linked to acts and experiences, rather than a transformation of theoretical knowledge into knowledge that is smart, effective and practicable (Gustavsen, 2004). In the shared, dialogical understanding of the other framework, a process of change can begin. However, this is not only a process of discovery about others; it is also a process of self-discovery. We are often unaware of what we ourselves are taking for granted. In order to make knowledge actionable, actors must be aware of the situation and the need to change it.

Inspired by Freire (1996), coding and decoding processes can be useful to help students gain awareness. Acting as a facilitator of the awareness process, the teacher codifies certain situations after observing students and initiating a dialogue with them. In the codification process, the teacher must not be too explicit about his or her perceptions (ideology and theoretical paradigm) but let students talk about issues in their own words. When confronted with a teacher's codification, students decode it by talking about it and generating data that will lead to an interpretation of how they perceive their roles as territorial actors. In the coding and decoding process, students and teacher move between abstract and concrete discussions. In abstract discussions, they discuss territorial development, the role of universities, transformation, and co-generation. In concrete discussions, they situate themselves within their need to transform into territorial actors. Seeing the situation only in the abstract does not lead to an awareness of change. Only through this dialectical process can awareness be unveiled.

## **Contextualising the case**

Observed from the outside, universities appear as monolithic organisations: large, indivisible, and powerful organisations that are slow to change. Such an image applies to the University of Agder. The number of students and employees has increased from year to year. In

2019, there were 13,000 students and 1,300 employees. The University of Agder's approach to regional engagement, measured through its strategic plans, has changed from its position as an ivory tower in the 1990s to that of an institution more active in its interaction with regional actors (Karlsen, 2019).

The university has two campuses, one in Grimstad, a city with about 24,000 inhabitants, and one in Kristiansand, with about 80,000 inhabitants. The Grimstad campus has approximately 3,500 students, mainly in engineering and nursing, and it is known for its interactions with regional actors. There is also a small cohort of students from the School of Business and Law, which is connected to the Department of Working Life and Innovation and located on the campus, and they will be the subject of the case explored in this chapter.

Before I return to the case, I would first like to examine the School's strategic plan and its implementation process. The vision of the 2016-2020 strategic plan is one of co-creating knowledge, which has connections to and similarities with the concept of co-generating knowledge (University of Agder, 2016). The strategic plan opened the possibility of experimenting with territorial development initiatives, such as an action research project based on the ARTD model. Because of the strategic plan, a co-creation lab was established with a project leader who sought out co-creation projects between the university and regional actors. The School of Business and Law also adapted to the vision of co-creation and stimulated the development of co-creation projects.

Three years ago, I took over an innovation course in the Innovation and Knowledge Development Master's programme, and together with a colleague, I decided to experiment with ARTD. The course started in 2017 and takes place in the fall. It deals with innovation in the public sector, and the idea is that students co-generate knowledge with regional actors, such as municipalities and businesses. In the first two years, students co-generated knowledge with the Grimstad municipality and its various industries. The foci were on the development of an industrial development plan and the idea of Grimstad as a host for the University of Agder. Now, in its third year, the course sees students working together with the municipality of Arendal on health-sector innovations.

Around 15 Master's students participate in the course each year, and it is divided into four parts. The first part is about innovation in the public sector; the second is about process knowledge and entails an introduction to awareness, action research, and the co-generation of knowledge; the third is about co-generating knowledge with regional actors; and the fourth entails a group oral exam and an individual home-based exam. The course involves two teachers from the School of Business and Law (a professor with innovation expertise and I) and an action researcher from Orkestra, who gained considerable experience under the auspices of Gipuzkoa Sarean, the Basque Country project mentioned earlier. The course has been considered successful by the university's management, the School of Business and Law, and territorial development actors in Grimstad municipality, who we collaborated with for the first two years. In his assessment of the course, Grimstad Economic Development Director Bodil Slettebø said, "[The Students]" work was of utmost importance for the municipality, as it comprised the basis for both the Strategic business plan and for the complementary action plan.

The course was also used as an example of engagement with regional actors when the AACSB (The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) committee evaluated the School of Business and Law. Moreover, in its final evaluation report, the committee wrote of the course in a positive light. Nonetheless, before I present the case, I will underline why it is important to work with an approach to awareness.

### **The case: The process of developing awareness**

The reason why the course focuses on the development of awareness of the territorial development role is that this role is new to students. They are trained to be neutral observers and not active participants in knowledge co-generation processes. In this role, they are novices, as per the definition of Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986), and they therefore need to reflect on their new role before they begin working with territorial development actors.

The teaching of both action research and the co-generation of knowledge is organised into sessions that focus on banking (teaching in the banking/linear form) and dialogue for generating awareness, with a distribution of 75 % of the former and 25 % of the latter. The reason for this distribution is that students are accustomed to the banking approach and feel safe with this teaching form. Introducing only 25 % dialogue created insecurity among them. In the dialogue sessions, we sat in a circle of chairs without desks in front of us. The idea behind this arrangement was that it removes physical barriers, such as the teacher's and students' desks, thereby creating a dynamic of equality; this method was inspired by one of Gustavsen (1992) 13 dialogical principles for creating change. During the dialogue sessions, we (the teachers) sensed that the students felt uneasy and uncertain, and we therefore asked them if they felt this way and why. They confirmed their uncertainty. Most of the students were silent, as they were afraid of engaging in dialogue and expressing their thoughts. The co-generation of knowledge with the aim of bringing about change was certainly not a role they were familiar with, even if they were students in a programme called Innovation and Knowledge Management. They had learned to understand innovation, knowledge management, and regional development as abstract concepts, not as concrete processes that would affect them as students. They had also learned to observe processes from the outside rather than participate in concrete processes themselves. The students were trying to make sense of what it meant to be a territorial development actor. One of them even said that we spent too much time on the dialogue and too little time teaching. We realised that we had made explicit the conflict between the banking approach and the problem-posing method (Freire, 1996) through the dialogue about students as territorial actors. As Freire (1996) expressed it, "The banking approach is resisting dialogue, while the problem-posing method assumes it." Clearly, the banking approach was deeply embedded in these students.

There is no quick fix in solving this conflict; nevertheless, by making it explicit in the classroom, we were able to identify two types of sub-conflicts. The first was between the banking and the problem-posing methods, which arose when we reorganised the teaching from the banking approach to the problem-posing method. The second was the classical conflict in social sciences between participant and observer (Skjervheim, 1959, 1996), or as one student expressed it, "Should we learn to be consultants?"

Although the tone of this question was not negative, it also showed a taken-for-granted assumption that actors from universities do not work or participate in processes such as those related to knowledge co-generation. This notion is passed on by an epistemology of positivism that interprets decision-making not as "expressions of incompatible values" but as technical problems that can be "resolved objectively through the rational assessment of evidence" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 67).

However, during the dialogue, students' attitudes developed towards awareness. And while theory is important, working with practitioners motivates students, as the below quotations from students demonstrate.

"I feel positive about applying theory to practice. It gives greater insight and makes the process more motivating."

“The challenge for us is the balance between theory and practice, how to address the case in a way that is not preachy and not only theory-driven but to use dialogue and reflection to construct knowledge.”

Through the dialogue, we tried to help students gain awareness of their roles as territorial development actors and prepare themselves for meetings with other actors. The result of the dialogue sessions is summarised in *Students’ Twelve Principles for Acting as Territorial Development Actors*,<sup>2</sup> which are set out below:

1. Approach the health sector in Arendal and its many actors.
2. Participate in stakeholders’ workdays.
3. Observe stakeholders and identify problems.
4. Facilitate dialogue and stakeholders’ learning processes.
5. Mirror reflections and thoughts from stakeholders.
6. Combine theory and practice.
7. Co-create knowledge.
8. Avoid banking.
9. Do not come up with solutions for actors; help them reach their own solutions.
10. Develop awareness of conflicts of interest.
11. Seek awareness and not a perfect solution.
12. Make knowledge actionable.

The first principle contextualised the case. In 2019, the case involved the health sector of Arendal, a town with about 44,000 inhabitants in Norway. The principles mentioned above were divided into three parts. The first part related to participation with health-sector actors and the development of a method for data generation through participation in their workday, which means students shadowed nurses and health workers for one whole workday. During that day, they observed and spoke with the actors about what they were observing; this was a manifestation of Schön’s (1983) practice of putting reflections into action. Afterwards, students facilitated a dialogue with actors in which they mirrored their thoughts about working in specific health institutions (specifically, a retirement home and an institution that provided home-based care). The second part related to co-generating knowledge with the actors (Principles 6-9). The last part (Principles 10-12) was about awareness and its connection to the two other spaces for dialogue (co-ordination and policy-design, and dialogue in and on intervention). Power issues and conflicts of interest were not necessarily observable but are always present in knowledge co-generation processes. Such issues can influence a process and are the best solution in practice (which is not necessarily the best solution in theory). However, solving conflicts of interest can make knowledge actionable.

For students, the principles were concrete guidelines for their actions with stakeholders. The first principle applied to the context of the territory of Arendal, while the other principles were universal. However, the students did not try to find a theoretically perfect solution; instead, they focused on developing their awareness of their own role in knowledge co-generation processes and the coming knowledge co-generation process with stakeholders.

Humility is important when meeting people with different knowledge, interpretations, and values, as the students’ expressions demonstrated. For the students, the principles made sense, which means that they have internal credibility. The principles prepared

<sup>2</sup> Co-generated with students from the ORG503 Innovation in the Public Sector course on 29th September 2019.

them for meeting with stakeholders, even if they could not be prepared for everything. Going forward, they will also need to learn to improve when necessary; nevertheless, they have started their journey to becoming territorial actors without waiting to enter working life.

## Conclusion

The case shows that it is possible to prepare students to become territorial development actors within an existing organisational and institutional framework in a university business school. It also shows that it is possible to work with another mode of knowledge construction, even within a university's dominant mode of knowledge construction. Students were able to glimpse another means of constructing knowledge, which was that of the co-generative mode and the problem-posing method. This mode is different from the University of Agder's dominant mode of knowledge construction, as is likely the case in many other universities. It is clear that one course cannot transform students into reflective practitioners and action researchers, and they will still be novice territorial development actors. When they start working, they can continue along the practitioner's path (Schön, 1983). I hope they will use awareness as a capability in their daily work as future practitioners, as awareness is important for the development of context-sensitive territorial policy.

There seems to be an agreement in the literature that one-size-fits-all strategies do not work for regional development (Tödting & Trippel, 2005). In practice, this implies that solutions have to be created each time and in each region *with* actors and not *for* them (Karlsen and Larrea, 2014). Despite the uniqueness of a single case, theoretical lessons can also be learned from case studies (Yin, 2013). The main theoretical lesson from this one is that students can be territorial actors working together with other territorial actors. This can be done under conditions that I will now specify.

The first condition is institutional acceptance, which means that the university needs to accept approaches to knowledge construction beyond the predominant banking approach. The vision of co-creation in the University of Agder's 2016-2020 strategy is an example of regulative institutional acceptance, by which I mean formal and codified standards, agreements and guidelines that regulate actors' behaviours (Scott, 2008). This regulative institutional acceptance creates the institutional foundation for experimenting with ARTD and is the "formal rule of the game" (North, 1990). There are also informal normative institutions that specify how things should be done (Scott, 2008). At the Department of Working Life and Innovation in Grimstad, where the case was situated, there has been a norm for collaboration with regional actors since its establishment in the early 1990s. Not all departments at the University of Agder have such a norm. However, such a norm makes the benefits of the course easier to realise, since it is within the norm of behaviour, even if the content of the course is new.

The second is that there need to be actors with knowledge and capabilities to experiment with action research within the institutional framework. In this case, the actors were professional action researchers with not only theoretical knowledge of the co-generation of knowledge but also experience from co-generation processes in Norway and the Basque Country. Additionally, there were also capable actors that were interested in collaborating and co-generating knowledge with the University of Agder and its students.

The third is that actors must be motivated to engage in co-generative processes. The teaching of ARTD demands more resources than an ordinary course, which can be taught in the classroom using books and articles. Co-generation with actors in the territory implies engagement, participation, planning, and the organisation of activities with regional actors outside the classroom. It is time-consuming, and time is money in today's universities. Up to



now, the course Innovation in the Public Sector has been given the necessary support from the School of Business and Law's management, since it is within the University of Agder's regulative institutional framework.

My final reflection addresses an action research challenge. In action research methodology, there exists a serious limitation regarding theoretical generalisation, i.e., how does one reach beyond the case, as theory cannot speak alone (Gustavsen, Hansson, & Qvale, 2008)? In this case, how could these methodologies be expanded to other courses or universities? There is a need for the construction of networks among a broad range of actors that can share ideas and practices. The challenge of scope can be addressed as a challenge inside the university as an organisation and as a challenge to all universities. There is a need to educate new generations of action researchers that can work with territorial development issues. This is a collective challenge for ARTD that was addressed in this chapter. We can only solve this together by making our knowledge actionable. My hope is that this book results in a programme for territorial development through which the next generation of action researchers can be trained. This has been done in Norway before, with the Enterprise Development and Working Life programme led by Morten Levin at Norwegian University of Science and Technology (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, 2016), where I myself was a student.

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## Short Chapter 5

# Emancipating students for learning, action and knowledge production

*Benito Teehankee*<sup>1</sup>

### **Resumen**

#### ***Emancipando a los estudiantes para el aprendizaje, la acción y la producción de conocimiento***

La expansión del papel de los estudiantes desde receptores pasivos de conocimiento a agentes reflexivos y activos para el desarrollo territorial y la construcción del conocimiento requiere un espacio innovador en el currículum y la pedagogía dentro de la universidad. Requiere también reexaminar la filosofía de la ciencia y los procesos de desarrollo del conocimiento que subyacen a gran parte de la educación superior. Hay una necesidad de que los estudiantes se alejen de estructuras de dependencia en relación con el conocimiento para acercarse a una estructura de emancipación. Deben aprender no sólo a actuar de forma reflexiva sobre el mundo, sino también a coger conocimiento robusto y práctico como académicos-actores en la práctica.

En De La Salle University en Manila, nuestros estudiantes de MBA, que compatibilizan los estudios con el trabajo, escriben y defienden un proyecto como investigadores en la acción internos que implementan con colaboradores para abordar problemas reales en sus respectivos lugares de trabajo. Los estudiantes de MBA han abordado un abanico amplio de problemas en sus proyectos, que incluyen temas de productividad, compromiso de los trabajadores, rotación de los empleados, cumplimiento de la legalidad, procesos de mejora, conflictos interdepartamentales, trabajo en equipo, conciliación de la vida laboral y familiar y salud en el lugar de trabajo.

Para motivar el papel de los estudiantes en este proceso, basamos la enseñanza de la investigación acción como internos en una filosofía de las ciencias sociales conocida como realismo crítico, fundado por el filósofo británico Roy Bhaskar. El realismo crítico argumenta que los problemas sociales tienen múltiples causas que los investigadores sociales y los investigadores en la acción necesitan entender y sobre los que deben actuar si estos problemas generan situaciones opresivas. Esto significa que los estudiantes, como investigadores en la

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acción, necesitan emanciparse y alcanzar plenitud como agentes racionales. Esta plenitud requiere elementos cognitivos, de empoderamiento y disposicionales.

La aspiración de educar a los estudiantes para ser agentes humanistas del cambio debe considerar la necesidad de liberarles de su sentido preconcebido de las limitaciones que tienen como agentes y desarrolladores del conocimiento- para emanciparse y ser seres racionales plenos.

## **Abstract**

### ***Emancipating students for learning, action and knowledge production***

Expanding the role for students from passive knowledge recipients to reflexive and active agents for territorial development and knowledge building requires innovative space in curriculum and pedagogy within the university. It also requires a re-examination of the philosophy of science and knowledge development processes that underpin much of higher education. There is a need for students to move away from a knowledge dependency structure to one of emancipation. They must learn not only to act reflexively on the world but also to co-generate robust and practical knowledge as practitioner-scholars.

At De La Salle University in Manila, our working MBA students write-up and defend an insider action research project which they implement with collaborators to address real issues in their respective workplaces. The MBA students have addressed a wide variety of issues in their projects, including productivity, worker engagement, worker turnover, legal compliance, process improvement, inter-departmental conflicts, teamwork, family-worklife balance and workplace health.

To motivate the students' role in this process, we ground the teaching of insider action research on a critical realist philosophy of social science which was founded by the British philosopher Roy Bhaskar. Critical realism posits that social issues have multiple causes which social researchers and action researchers need to understand and must act on if they are resulting in oppressive situations. This means that students as action researchers need to achieve emancipation and full rational agency. The latter, in turn, requires cognitive, empowerment and dispositional elements.

Aspirations to educate students to be humanistic change agents must address the need to free them from their preconceived sense of limitations as agents and developers of knowledge – to be emancipated and fully rational beings.

## **Emancipating students for learning, action and knowledge production**

Karlsen's thesis is that the higher educational process can enable students to be aware of and to choose to be agents for territorial development as they facilitate the reflection and action of territorial stakeholders. Given that students today can directly access massive amounts of information through the Internet and their smartphones, there is indeed a critical need for higher education to move beyond transmitting knowledge to be consumed passively by students. Instead, the university, because of its socio-politically privileged status in society, can be an excellent platform to launch students into active roles of civic contribution through interacting, learning and acting with societal stakeholders to advance social transformation. Importantly, the process also enables students to be themselves co-generators of knowledge through the discipline of action research.

The role enabled by Karlsen among his business school students in *Innovation and Knowledge Development* is an extension of the interaction of researchers and territorial ac-

tors within agoras (Karlsen & Larrea, 2016) applied specifically to industrial development planning and health.

Needless to say, the achievement of this expanded role for students requires innovative space in curriculum and pedagogy within the university. It also requires a re-examination of the philosophy of science and knowledge development processes that underpin much of higher education. These frame knowledge as the product of technical expertise usually captured in codified texts and not the result of reflective action by practitioners. This perspective presumes that practitioners and students alike are mostly dependent on the expertise of scholars and technical people for practical and usable knowledge.

There is a need for students to move away from this knowledge dependency structure to one of emancipation. That is, they must learn not only to act reflexively on the world but also to co-generate robust and practical knowledge (Bhaskar, 2009) in the process of action with sufficient confidence. In short, they need to be practitioner-scholars (Coghlan, 2011).

At De La Salle University in Manila, our working MBA students write-up and defend an insider action research project which they implement with collaborators to address real issues in their respective workplaces (Coghlan & Brannick, 2014). This serves as the integrating and terminal product of their graduate education and exposes them to being practitioner-scholars. It also concretely develops their ability to be humanistic agents of change in their workplaces, which is a main intended learning outcome of our MBA program and a conscious intervention to avoid well-known problems with MBA programs (Navarro, 2008).

The MBA students have addressed a wide variety of issues through their projects, including productivity, worker engagement, worker turnover, legal compliance, process improvement, inter-departmental conflicts, teamwork, family-work life balance and workplace health. Although they do not always fully resolve their chosen focal issues during the time-frame of their MBA program, we encourage them to reflect on their development as reflexive and collaborative practitioners in the process of doing their projects. Moreover, they are asked to develop working theories of the causes of their focal issues and the approach they took in addressing them.

Since the inception of the insider action research program in 2012 (Teehankee, 2018), our two major pedagogical challenges have been in leading the students to develop the confidence to engage potentially controversial and politically charged workplace issues using behavioral science and management literature while also developing their own scientific and practical theories about these issues. While action research founder Kurt Lewin argued for the practicality of good theories derived from experimentation in practice, MBA students struggle with their roles as change agents and developers of theory.

To motivate the students' role and learning process, we have found it helpful to ground the teaching of insider action research on a critical realist philosophy of social science (Houston, 2014; Winter & Munn-Giddings, 2001). Critical realism was founded by the British philosopher Roy Bhaskar (1979/1989, 2009). In support of insider action research, critical realism posits that social reality (e.g., an organizational issue) is due to a multiplicity of causes and social researchers need to understand such causes (i.e., theorize) and, importantly, are ethically bound to act on these causes if they are resulting in oppressive situations in the workplace.

Students have often reported their lack of empowerment in the workplace. This is a form of oppression resulting from certain social structures (e.g., their inability to contest conditions of overwork due to existing policies and supervisor expectations, etc.). This discourages them from pursuing meaningful change projects as rational change agents. Bhaskar argues that an emancipated person depends on rational agency (Bhaskar, 2008; p. 98) which requires the person to:

1. Possess the knowledge to act in one's own real interests (the cognitive requirement).
2. Be able to access the skill, resources and opportunities to do so (the empowered component).
3. Be disposed to so act (the dispositional or motivational condition) (Bhaskar, 2008; p. 260).

The cognitive requirement relates to the ability of students to develop accurate explanatory theories of the conditions they face in the workplace. Importantly, critical realism highlights the role of the person's own perceptions and thinking processes in perpetuating a problematic situation either through inaction or active reproduction. Consequently, students need to realize that, while existing social structures may be causing the issues they face, they themselves are participants in reinforcing these very same structures. For the students, the recognition of their own distorted perceptions and unwitting self-defeating behaviors is a transformative experience. This usually results after they undergo iterative cycles of action and reflection during their action research projects (Mezirow, 1990).

The empowerment component relates to the students' skills in observation, reflection, and collaborative dialogue, analysis and hypothesis testing (Argyris & Schön, 1974) as they pursue iterative cycles of change. Developing these skills is a major goal of the MBA program and leads to the students' sense of autonomy or self-directedness. Finally, the motivational component relates to the students' level of drive and courage to bring their understanding and skills to bear on initiating the needed change in collaboration with stakeholders.

Our students have realized that major organizational change always happens within a structural and cultural context. Therefore, they do not overestimate their chances of achieving change within the relatively short time frame that the MBA program affords. Rather, they use the opportunity to dialogue with stakeholders on problematic situations as a collaborative learning opportunity and a chance to reflect on their role as organizational agents. It is a way for them to expand their relational and political repertoires so that organizational life can be more purposeful and meaningful, even if constrained by realities which precede them and which may ultimately outlast them. Constructive engagement, hopefully, becomes a lifetime commitment not because it "works" but because it is worthwhile for personal growth in many dimensions of being human: cognitive, emotional, social, ethical, aesthetic, physical and even spiritual.

In conclusion, our aspiration to educate our students to be humanistic change agents must address the need to free the students from their preconceived sense of limitations as agents and developers of knowledge. While we have made some progress in helping the MBA students to advance in their sense of emancipation, we are treating the insider action research program itself *as an insider action research project*.

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## Experiential Post 5

# Students as agents of territorial development: a personal reflection

Rómulo Pinheiro<sup>1</sup>

### **Sammendrag**

#### *Studenter som aktører i regional utvikling: en personlig refleksjon*

Refleksjonene kommer fra direkte engasjement i et tverrfaglig kurs i en mastergrad i Norge med fokus på samskaping. I sammenheng med dette, trekker jeg fire hovedutfordringer: (a) den langsiktige tidsmessige karakteren av territorielle prosesser; (b) sosialisering av studenter (c) den individualistiske karakteren av utdanningsmiljøer i de fleste norske universiteter og (d) relevansen av bevissthet.

### **Resumen**

#### *Los estudiantes como agentes de desarrollo territorial: una reflexión personal*

Mis reflexiones provienen de mi involucración directa en un curso interdisciplinar en una maestría en Noruega, en el que nos hemos focalizado en procesos de co-creación. En el contexto de esta experiencia, subrayo cuatro retos principales: (a) la naturaleza temporal de largo plazo de los procesos territoriales, que no concuerda con los tiempos docentes; (b) la socialización de los estudiantes en aproximaciones distintas a las orientadas a la resolución de problemas; (c) la naturaleza individualista de los entornos educativos en la mayoría de las universidades noruegas y (d) la relevancia de la concientización, en contextos en que los estudiantes están acostumbrados a pasar rápidamente a la discusión de las soluciones, con poco tiempo para tomar conciencia de la complejidad.

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UiA Student Aileen Bjørnstad presenting the co-creation project to regional actors and other guests, as part of the Open Lab Course co-creation (December 2019).

My reflections when reacting to James Karlsen's chapter are drawn from direct involvement with an interdisciplinary master course focusing on co-creation in Norway. I would like to point to *four* key challenges.

The first pertains to the *temporal nature* of students as agents of territorial development. Both awareness and active engagement (which requires both knowledge and trust) with regional actors require time. The scope of one semester of studies is a very limited time frame for students to gain in-depth knowledge and awareness, of the external circumstances surrounding the problem at hand as well as their own self-knowledge. Given that trust, both amongst students working as a team and between the latter and regional actors, is a pre-requisite for co-creation, a short-term relation presents clear challenges to the process. One solution in this respect would be to enlarge the co-creation process to a full academic year, but this would entail considerable redesigning of curriculum structures, especially when such courses are offered as optional and thus are not part and parcel of a specific degree program.

The second tension relates to *socialisation effects*. Most students are socialised with the teacher and literature as the primary sources of knowledge, and a clear (given) structure for classes, essays and evaluations. A problem-based learning approach challenges such conceptions and empowers students to design their own learning environments, with teachers (as mentors) and codified knowledge acting as supplementary rather than primary resources. That said, in practice students have difficulties moving from one learning paradigm to the other, a process that is made more difficult since they, for the most part, are still active students in programs that rely on classic perspectives, thus having to balance the co-existence of two relatively distinct learning methods and paradigms.

The third challenge is cultural and is associated with the *individualistic nature* of the learning environment at most Norwegian universities. For the most part, (Norwegian) students approach learning as an individual rather than a collective process. This creates constraints when it comes to working together as a group in tackling a given regional challenge. The natural response by students is to "projectise" and delegate tasks, in accordance with the analytic reductionism paradigm rather than adopting a more holistic perspective where roles and tasks are both shared and co-evolve. Developing students' awareness towards their

role as collective learners takes time and effort, and is best supported with acculturation aspects; hence, this challenge is related to the previous two.

The fourth and final challenge refers to the critical role of *awareness*. The natural tendency for most students is to quickly jump into a discussion of solutions instead of spending time understanding the problem at hand and the complex environment that surrounds it. A focus on process rather than outcome is paramount. Yet, for this to work there is a need to develop better pedagogical tools for assessing process-centred learning, including on self-awareness in the context of one's role as a territorial development actor.



### **PART III**

The future of *action research for territorial development*: exploring new ideas, concepts and frameworks

### **PARTE III**

El futuro de la *investigación acción para el desarrollo territorial*: explorando nuevas ideas, conceptos y marcos



## Chapter 6

# Communication in the context of action research processes: an experiment with the living spiral methodology

*Maite Reizabal*<sup>1</sup>

### **Laburpena**

*Komunikazioa ikerketa ekintza prozesuen baitan: espiral biziaren metodologiarekin esperimentu bat*

Ikerketa ekintzak, eta batik bat komunitatean oinarritutako ikerketa partehartzaileak (KOIP) eta komunitatean oinarritutako ikerketa ekintza partehartzaileak (KOIEP), komunitateek komunikatzaile profesionalen laguntzaz sortutako bideo parte hartzaileak erabili ohi dituzte hauek ahalduz. Hain zuzen ere, aktoreen ahotsa indartzeko komunikazioari lotutako ikerketa ekintzako literatura horri lotuta dago batik bat, komunikazio tresnen erabilerari. Baina literatura horretan gauza gutxi topatu daitezke komunikazioa prozesuaren parte bezala ulertzen duten ikerketa ekintza prozesuei buruz. Lurralde garapenerako ikerketa ekintzak (LGIE) komunikatzailearen rola prozesuan integratzen du, ikertzaileen eta lurraldeko eragileen rolaekin batera.

Kapitulu honek LGIEko talde eta prozesu bateko komunikazioa eta komunikatzailearen rolak aurkeztu nahi ditu, prozesu horren parte integral eta egiturazkoa dela jakinik, rol hori jokatzeko duen pertsona baten esperientziatik abiatuz. Hain zuzen ere, komunikatzaile profesional horrek proiektuaren egunerokotasunean eta bilera eta tailer guztietan hartzen du parte, eta komunikazioko hainbat tresna erabiltzen ditu aktoreen ahotsa jasotzeko.

Horrez gain, Lurralde Garapenerako Laborategia —LGIE metodologiaren garapenerako proiektu nagusia izan dena— modu zabalenean aurkezten duen kapitulu ere bada. Proiektu horren helburua da Gipuzkoako Foru Aldundiaren eta Gipuzkoako garapen agentzien artean (baita gehitu daitezkeen beste zenbait agentzeren artean ere) maila anitzeko eta elkarlanerako gobernantza irekia eraikitzea, batik bat ekonomia eta garapen instituzionalari lotutako politika publikoak hobetzeko.

Egiturazko komunikazioaz eta Lurralde Garapenerako Laborategiaren garapenaz hitz egiteko espiral biziaren markoarekin esperimendatzen du kapitulu honek. Thomas MacIntyre eta bere taldekideek sortutako markoak artea du oinarri. Zehazki, landare baten metafora erabiltzen da prozesu baten inguruko analisia egiteko eta horren bitartez,

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prozesuak izan duen bilakaera, erronkak edo aspektu ikusiezinak identifikatu eta eraldaketa bultzatzeko. Kapitulu honetan, espiral biziaren markoaren erabilerak zenbait helburu ditu: aktoreen prozesua sakon ulertzea eta haien ahotsa ekartzea, komunikazioak prozesu horretan izan duen rola esplizitatzea eta komunikatzeko edo narratibak eraikitzeke modu desberdin batekin espermentatzea. Erabilitako metafora, kasu honetan, zuhaitz batena da, haginarena: Gipuzkoako armarrarian azaltzen den zuhaitza da, milaka urtekoa eta mantso hazten dena, eta bere burua ernaberritzeko gaitasuna duena. Kapitulu honek Gipuzkoako Foru Aldundiaren eta garapen agentzien arteko gobernantzaren instituzionalizazio prozesuaren sustraiak, enborra, adarrak, hostoak eta ariloak aurkezten ditu. Horretarako, azalpen orokorrez gain, komunikazioko tresna desberdinen bitartez bildutako aktoreen hitzak jasotzen ditu, prozesuan integratutako komunikazioak izan dezakeen rola ere aditzera emateko.

Kapitulua ondo erabiltzen esperientzia honetan lortutako ikasketak nagusiak aurkezten dira, besteak beste, komunikatzaileen eta lurraldeko eragileen ahotsak uztartzea eta esplizitazio-inplizitazioa edo komunikazioak izan dezakeen rola lurraldeko eragileen ahotsak hartu eta narratibak lotu eta eraikitzeke.

## Resumen

### *La comunicación en el contexto de los procesos de investigación acción: un experimento con la metodología de la espiral viva*

La investigación acción y, principalmente, la investigación participativa basada en la comunidad (IPBC) y la investigación acción participativa basada en la comunidad (IAPBC), han solido emplear los vídeos participativos creados por las comunidades con ayuda de profesionales como herramienta de empoderamiento de dichas comunidades. Precisamente, la literatura sobre la comunicación como herramienta de empoderamiento de la voz de los actores está principalmente ligada a esto, al uso de herramientas de comunicación. Pero, en dicha literatura, el contenido relacionado con los procesos de investigación acción que entienden la comunicación como parte del proyecto es limitado. La *investigación acción para el desarrollo territorial* (IATD) integra el rol del comunicador en el proceso junto con el de los investigadores y los agentes territoriales.

Este capítulo presenta los roles de la comunicación y de los comunicadores como parte integral y estructural de un equipo y un proceso de IATD, partiendo de la experiencia de una persona que desempeña dicho papel. Dicha comunicadora profesional participa en el día a día del proyecto, así como en todas sus reuniones y sus talleres, y emplea distintas herramientas de comunicación para recoger la voz de los actores.

Además, se trata del capítulo que más extensamente muestra el Laboratorio de Desarrollo Territorial, el proyecto en el que se ha desarrollado principalmente de la metodología de IADT. El objetivo de ese proyecto es construir una gobernanza multinivel, colaborativa y abierta entre la Diputación Foral de Gipuzkoa y las agencias de desarrollo de Gipuzkoa (así como entre agentes que se puedan ir incorporando), principalmente para mejorar las políticas públicas ligadas a la economía y el desarrollo institucional.

Para hablar sobre la comunicación y el Laboratorio de Desarrollo Territorial, el capítulo experimenta con el marco de Espiral Viva. El marco, creado por Thomas MacIntyre y sus compañeras de equipo, se basa en el arte. En dicho marco, se emplea la metáfora de una planta para analizar un proceso y, a partir de la misma, identificar su evolución, sus retos o sus aspectos invisibles e impulsar el cambio. La utilización de Espiral Viva en este capítulo tiene distintos objetivos: entender en profundidad el proceso de los actores y traer su voz, explicitar el rol de la comunicación en dicho proceso y experimentar con una forma diferente de comunicar o de construir narrativas. La metáfora empleada para ello, en este caso, es la de un árbol: el tejo. Se trata del árbol que aparece en el escudo de Gipuzkoa, que es milenario y que



crece despacio, y que tiene la capacidad de regenerarse a sí mismo con un sistema particular. El capítulo presenta las raíces, el tronco, las ramas, las hojas y los arillos del proceso de institucionalización de la gobernanza entre la Diputación Foral de Gipuzkoa y las agencias de desarrollo. Por ese motivo, además de las explicaciones generales, reúne palabras de los distintos actores que se han recogido mediante el uso de diferentes herramientas de comunicación entre 2015 y 2019, para mostrar el rol que puede desempeñar la comunicación integrada en procesos.

En las conclusiones del capítulo, se muestran los aprendizajes principales de esta experiencia, entre otros, la combinación de la voz de los actores territoriales y del comunicador, y la explicitación-*implicitación*, o el rol que puede desempeñar la comunicación para tomar las voces de los agentes territoriales y enlazar y construir narrativas.

## Communication in the context of action research processes: an experiment with the living spiral methodology

### Introduction

The purpose of my chapter in this book is twofold. On the one hand, it is the chapter which presents in greater detail the Territorial Development Laboratory (TDLab) that has been the main project in the development of action research for territorial development (ARTD). This project aims to construct collaborative, open, and multilevel governance between the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa and the county development agencies (as well as other agents that could be added) to improve public policies, particularly related to economic and institutional development.

On the other hand, my purpose is also to share with the reader my insights into one of the features of ARTD that, to date, has been understudied by academics: the integration of communication specialists as active members in action research (AR) teams. This integration has been carried out both at Orkestra (Basque Country, Spain) and Praxis (Rafaela, Argentina). One of my reflections on this feature is that, even though I am part of an ARTD team and I participate in an ARTD process, where communication plays a role, I do not consider myself an action researcher. I am a communicator who integrates communication into AR in a space that lies in the intersection of action researchers and practitioners, and I do not identify myself exclusively with any of them. It is for this reason that I seldom talk about AR in the chapter and that I focus my arguments more on communication.

In order to explore the role of communication in ARTD and share the findings of this exploration, in this chapter I experiment with a new way of understanding and communicating a process: the *living spiral framework* (MacIntyre, Chaves and McGarry, 2018), which is a transformative narrative that uses the metaphor of a plant or a tree to explain a process. This framework was created and developed by Thomas MacIntyre (together with other members of his team), who was my co-inquirer in this chapter. He facilitated the process of building a specific *living spiral* that is described in this chapter and which serves as its backbone. This work was mainly done in the context of the CoLab “Transformation Narratives,” which he organised with the AR+ network.

My aim here is to share a narrative of the TDLab by using this living spiral. Following the twofold perspective of this chapter, I share two types of insights. Some have to do with the usefulness of profiles like mine, communication specialists, in the development of relationships of trust and dialogue processes in AR, while the others are related to the living spiral methodology and my experience when using it.

As a communicator, I consider languages to be an essential tool which transmits much more than what can be captured in a translation. We, as contributors to this book, were challenged to experiment with this idea. Although this chapter is mainly written in English, I have kept the beginning of the original quotes by policymakers in Basque (in italics), but the whole quotes have been translated into English. The main reason for this is that this project was largely developed in Basque, an official but minority language in our territory. Each language gives a particular identity to each project. And therefore, the words of the policymakers in Basque have been kept so as to reflect the identity of the TDLab.

## The role of communication in ARTD: strengthening the voice of the actors

In this section, I use the literature on Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) and Community-Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR) to discuss the main features of ARTD in terms of communication.

CBPR and CBPAR are relevant perspectives when it comes to understanding how the literature on AR has addressed communication to enhance or empower the voice of the actors (stakeholders). Both approaches have inspired me to frame communication in ARTD. However, the actors they work with, the way in which they develop the communication tools, and their overall vision are very different.

For instance, *participatory videos*<sup>2</sup> are commonplace in CBPR processes. Communities themselves create these videos, and this has a great deal to do with the CBPR approach itself. According to Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, “CBPR is a collaborative and systematic approach to inquiry that involves all partners in the research process, emphasising their complementary strengths” (2014, p. 152). In other words, it focuses on the strengths and the resources of the community, and on what is important to them (Coghlan and Brydon-Miller, 2014, p. 152). Most of the projects carried out in ARTD have been developed with policymakers. Their time is usually limited and highly focused on day-to-day policies and politics-related issues, where AR is subtly integrated, and there is little time for collecting their insights or participating in co-generated communicative processes. Consequently, in our case, video making is not participatory; empowerment of actors is achieved mainly through the dialogue in workshops. The purpose of filming the workshops is to capture, through the participants’ voice, what is most relevant to them in the workshops, and the process that frames them. This does not mean that by making the video, we do not also aim to give voice to their concerns or strengthen the network. However, we seldom get them involved for more than 5 to 10 minutes in the making of communication materials.

In this chapter, my reinterpretation of the living spiral responds to these features of ARTD. Therefore, to be able to construct the living spiral, I use phrases from policy makers that were systematised during the policy and political discussion of the ARTD process.

The main difference I find between CBPR and ARTD is the way in which they interpret communication. CBPR processes use videos as a tool for stakeholders but do not engage communicators as organisational and integrated members of the research team and thus, of the process (at least not explicitly). In this sense, the video creation process is often facilitated by a specialist in group dynamics, oral, visual, and written narratives, and video software, who is usually an external professional that is not part of the practitioners’ process. On the other hand, although this specific feature has not been discussed in the academic literature to date, the ARTD environment considers that communicators, together with researchers and practitioners, are also part of the process, where they can play an important role in enhancing the voice of the actors using different communication tools. This is related to the reflection on how diverse kinds of useful expertise (survey researchers, photojournalists) can play a role in AR processes in general.

<sup>2</sup> “The process of participatory video”. *Transformative storytelling for social change*. Obtained at: <https://www.transformativestory.org/what-are-the-methods-for-transformative-storytelling/collective-storytelling-through-participatory-video/the-process-of-participatory-video/>

“Participatory video”. *Collective Social Innovation*. Obtained at: <http://innovacion-soci.webs.upv.es/index.php/participatory-videos>

Consequently, in some ARTD projects like TDLab, communication has been integrated into the AR process, where the communicator has an overall vision of the process, participates in its day-to-day activities and attends most of the meetings and workshops. Thanks to this integration, the communicator is able to identify and communicate any key aspects that might emerge in the process and suggest creating communication materials (videos, interviews, etc.). And that way, communicators, stakeholders and researchers all narrate the story together about the project in real time, and not just at the end of the process.

The objective of these communication materials is twofold. While the aim of some contents is often to share news about the project with those not participating in it, most of the time, the aim is to enhance the voice of participants and the dialogue between them, which nearly always involves listening, reflecting, synthesizing, and sharing in order to strengthen the voice of the participants.

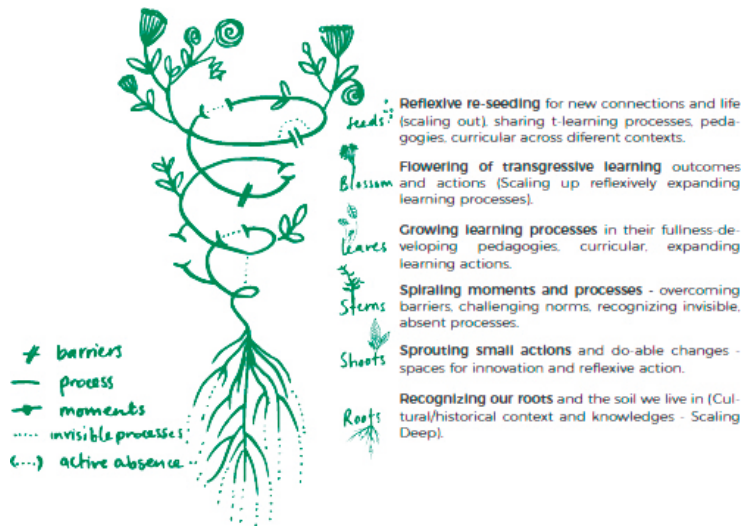
Furthermore, even though the initial idea and design of the communicative process might come from the communicator, there is always a discussion with the actors to see whether it suits them or not. Therefore, we can say that the communicator *facilitates* the creation process of the communication product, which is *co-generated*. But he or she is also in charge of the most time-consuming task: writing and editing. And because of this, although it is only the voice of practitioners that appears in an explicit way, implicitly (by designing and developing the communication material), the voice of the communicator also appears alongside that of the practitioners.

### **Methodology: the living spiral framework**

The *living spiral framework* can be considered an arts-based method. It aims to help discover “how and to what extent, personal and collective learning journeys result in transformations towards sustainability, including the challenges and the tensions experienced along the way” (Macintyre *et al.*, 2018, p. 8). This “tree metaphor” or “plant metaphor” mentioned earlier is often used in the context of socio-ecological processes. Hence, the term sustainability is usually understood from an environmental point of view. However, in the process analysed, the concept of sustainability is more related to establishing sustainable relationships between actors which will impact positively on politics, policies and, consequently, on society. That is to say, in the ARTD case, the living spiral framework aims to achieve open governance based on collaboration.

To be able to do this, it uses a narrative “to generate and analyse” (Macintyre *et al.*, 2018, p. 14) the process, which is called the *living spiral* and is “very useful as it appreciates the uncertain, organic and at times rapidly evolving nature of transformations” (Macintyre *et al.*, 2018, p. 14).

As the following image shows, the living spiral metaphor is like a plant, with its roots, stems, leaves....



Source: The Living Spiral Framework: a guide for researching stories of transformation, p. 15.

Thus, we use the living spiral metaphor to better understand the process carried out by practitioners in order to tell their story and bring their voice to the forefront. But, at the same time, as a communicator, it is a way to experiment with other forms of communication or narratives more connected to the role that communication itself plays in the ARTD process.

Moreover, the living spiral has a transformative aim. Here, transformation comes from the integration of the study, presented in this chapter, into more extensive processes (TD-Lab), something that creative and arts-based methods in AR processes like this one can offer (Etmanski and Bishop, 2017).

## The case: the institutionalisation of governance between the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa and county development agencies

### Contextualising the case

In order to later present the lessons I learnt with the living spiral, it is important first to contextualise my work as a communicator in ARTD.

Within the project, I use communication as a facilitator to be able to increase the voice of the different policymakers (the main stakeholders in the ARTD process) and action researchers who are part of the project. This helps participants in ARTD understand what the process consists in and integrate it better, as well as strengthening the network. We work with several traditional communicative tools which we classify here in two groups:

- The ones I prepare and edit myself, like the systematisation of the workshops and meetings, written interviews, video interviews, etc.
- And the ones that policymakers or researchers write or create directly, although sometimes I might be the one who proposes the topic and format, such as short articles, blog posts, etc.

Compared to other communicators in research organisations who are not involved in AR, my role here is different because I am part of the process. Unlike external journalists from the media who write about a research project, I participate in all the meetings and workshops, which allows me to have an overall vision of the process and to be in a continuous dialogue with the actors. In this manner, my communication approach is built from the process itself, and I also contribute to the process, as I am able to discern what might be the key point in each moment of the project and communicate it.

During my four years at Orkestra, I have experimented with traditional communication tools to collect the views of policymakers and bring them to the forefront. In this section, I bring together the description of my particular living spiral of the TDLab with some insights and lessons learnt while adapting this methodology to our own particular circumstances at the TDLab. The specific case used will be the institutionalisation of governance between the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa (Council) and County Development Agencies (CDAs or agencies) at the TDLab.

### *Choosing a plant: the yew*

The living spiral metaphor can take the form of any plant, depending on what we think is more appropriate to explain the process (Macintyre *et al.*, 2018, p. 23). Choosing a plant required thinking about the TDLab in ways I had not done up until then, and I saw this reflection as being part of the methodology and my learning process. I chose the yew (also known as *taxus baccata*), which is in fact not a plant but a tree. There are several reasons why I chose this particular tree to explain this process:

- The main reason why I started to consider the yew for my living spiral metaphor is that it is the tree that appears on the coat of arms of Gipuzkoa, the province in which the process is taking place. Despite not being the most common tree here and also a very poisonous one, some of its characteristics helped me to think about the process, which made it a great metaphor.
- The yew is a millenary tree. It takes its time to grow, and it does not blossom but produces arils (like red berries) that contain the seed. The yew needs around 40 years to start growing arils. This is something I can relate to regarding the whole TDLab process. Building relationships with trust, as well as institutionalising them, also takes time. But it is thanks to this that we have been able to establish a strong process, which has survived for ten years, with three different governments and two opposite political parties.
- The yew tree has the capacity to regenerate itself through a special system. The trunk is empty inside, and this allows not only roots to grow from the top of the tree to the bottom but that the trunk, the leaves and all other parts of the plant are regenerated. Thanks to this system, I was able to see that our specific process, which I wanted to explain using this living spiral metaphor, helped “regenerate” the existing governance already operating in the territory (i.e., we did not create new governance from scratch). This regeneration comes from the process itself and the people that are part of it.

In the next sections, I make further use of this metaphor, with the twofold objective of sharing with the reader my perspective on the TDLab based on the views of policymakers, and also my experience in adapting the living spiral methodology. The narrative has the following parts: roots, trunk, branches, leaves, and arils.

## Roots

Yews have several new roots that grow into the ground and are the starting point of its regeneration. They give us the context and background. Yet this does not mean that all the roots are “positive”.

In the case of the TDLab, I have identified two new roots that are key elements in the process, which are trust and political willingness. The TDLab has built on these two elements to regenerate itself.

These roots were generated at the beginning of the council terms, starting in 2011 and 2015, of different governments of different political parties and with diverse historical, social, economic, and political backgrounds, since these governments decided to give continuity to a project that had either been initiated or reformulated by another party in a previous term.

The construction of the TDLab started in 2009 under the rule of the PNV (Basque Nationalist Party). When EH Bildu’s party arrived in government in 2011, they decided to continue with the project but adapted it to their principles and terms. When the PNV came back into power after four years, the continuity of the project was not totally guaranteed. But eventually, the decision was made to maintain the project.

To represent these roots, I have chosen the words of one of the policymakers that participated in the decisions in 2009 and 2015:

“Liskar politikoak proiektu asko trabatu ditu [...]”

“Political conflicts have limited many projects in Gipuzkoa and it was about time that new decision spaces were opened where agreement is possible.” (Presentation of the book *Gipuzkoa Sarean Bidean*, 19th November 2019).

Besides, I consider that this “roots metaphor” is a good one to illustrate the new paths initiated by the Council and the agencies in the context of the TDLab. Agencies were included for the first time in 2013 after EH Bildu carried out a study inside the Council to see what the aim of the process should be and decided that agencies could play a relevant role in the continuity of the process. To integrate the agencies, they created two spaces: the Intercounty Board (for the people in charge of the Agencies and Council) and the Facilitators’ AR process space (to improve the facilitation skills of the agencies’ technical staff). This helped to build relationships of trust between the Council and agencies and gave them a basis and a direction to follow.

In order to strengthen these roots, feelings of mistrust and misunderstandings had to be overcome, which was one of the main tasks of ARTD. On the one hand, the Council had (historically) questioned the role of agencies while, on the other hand, the agencies only saw the Council as a source of money.

Below is an extract from a video recorded at the beginning of the council term (March 2016) where the director of Oarsoaldea’s CDA explained how council and agency policies had converged, for which it is important to emphasise that none of the agencies was self-sufficient:

“Garapen agentzien ardura nagusia da gure eskualdetako garapen sozioekonomikoa sustatzea eta horretan eraginkorrak izatea da [...]”

“The main responsibility of agencies is to support the socio-economic development of our counties. But, although we are efficient in doing so, we do not have formal competences. [...] I think the main challenge is to link the Council’s policies with our own work.”

The base of all of this was the ARTD methodology, which gave the process a mechanism with which to continue.

### *Trunk*

Roots are connected to the trunk, and the trunk is the part of the tree that collects the nutrients from the roots and drives them through the branches for it to be able to produce leaves and arils, and at the same time, it is the “spine” of the tree. Without the trunk, the whole process would not be possible. Because of that, it somehow gives stability to the process, and when it regenerates, it catalyses transformation. The living spiral methodology helped me see the internal interdepartmental coordination of the Council as an essential part (trunk) of the TDLab and made me realise that some of the choices made at the beginning of the 2015-2019 term were key decisions in that they allowed the process to continue.

After deciding to continue with the TDLab for the new term, the General Deputy’s Cabinet chose to share the leadership of the process with the Economic Promotion Department for the first time. Until that moment, the process had been led solely by the General Deputy’s Department. As the process was very related to economic and institutional development, they saw an advantage in working with small and medium enterprises within the project. The ARTD methodology once again contributed to building trust in relationships, which made this collaborative approach possible. Communication helped reinforce these relationships through the newsletter, among other informative tools. The innovation director of the Economic Promotion Department said the following in an interview that was published in newsletter number 12 (January-February 2016):

“Enpresei dagokienez, Gipuzkoa Sareaneko filosofiak enpresa txikien arteko elkar-lana bultzatuko du [...]”

“Regarding firms, the philosophy of Gipuzkoa Sarean [former name for TDLab] is to support collaboration between small firms, with the goal of improving their competitiveness. [...] We think that it is necessary to work with development agencies, municipalities, and other economic agents in an aligned and efficient way and, in that sense, the Gipuzkoa Sarean initiative will be useful.”

By communicating this through a newsletter, relevant information was shared with all participants, and commitment from the stakeholders was gained, which is an example of how communication, integrated into a wider AR process, helps develop a broad range of dialogical approaches where policymakers not only talk but create the conditions for collaborative action.

### *Branches*

Thanks to the previously described roots and trunk, the tree is able to grow branches. Branches are the result of the conditions generated by the roots and the trunk. And, like every tree, yews have small branches and strong ones. In 2017, the Council and agencies signed an agreement for a new form of collaborative governance for economic development policies, which I see as a strong branch that supports many other projects (different policy programmes).



Reaching this agreement was not easy, and it took approximately one year to be signed. The Council team in charge of the project (made up of two members of the General Deputy's Department, a politician, and a technical staff member) agreed with the researchers that Orkestra would facilitate the learning and trust-building process, and that they would facilitate the negotiations because it was foreseen that their role as facilitators would be increasingly important.

For the first part of the process, the trust-building, different diagnoses were used that helped them reflect on the relationship and understand each other's positions. Issues such as financing, roles, trust relationships, etc., were discussed.

In the second part, they started working on a document that would end up being an agreement signed by the two parties. The Council wrote the first version which it gave to the agencies, and this is how the negotiation started. This process, as said before, was facilitated by the person in charge of the project, who was a member of the Council.

Here, I would again like to highlight the role of communication during that time. As the communicator, I edited the introduction in the TDLab newsletters which is usually written by the policymaker in charge of TDLab. At that time, we both agreed that it would be the right moment to write about the negotiation process while it was still underway (the agreement was signed in June, and he wrote this piece of information in the newsletter issued January-February 2017). By writing and sharing the text below, the way I see it is that he was communicating to the rest of the participants that the future agreement was more than merely a piece of paper and was a matter that required responsibility from everyone, especially from those taking over researchers in the facilitation of the process:

“Gobernantza berri bat eraikitzea erraz esan eta nekez egiten da [...]”

“Building new governance is easy to say, but difficult to do. However, after the interactions and meetings held lately, I would say we are taking firm steps. And in this regard, there is a reflection concerning the changes in roles and attitudes of all of us I would like to share. When we started on this path in Arrasate, on 26<sup>th</sup> May last year, and began the process to sign the agreement at the Intercountry Board, researchers proposed a procedure. As a matter of fact, we asked them to facilitate that part of the process. However, as the process goes on, we have seen [...] that the facilitation of researchers is not enough, and that the Council team has adopted this role as its own, at first gradually but lately in a much more direct manner. In the last few months, I have personally taken on the role of facilitator, and I would like to share two thoughts I found significant along that path. On the one hand, adopting the role as facilitators meant ‘that we went from being a witness to actually carrying out the process,’ and I would say something similar is also happening with the county agencies. Consequently, the new governance has been ‘taken out of the research laboratory’ and we are bringing it to life in our daily activities. Thus, we are starting a new phase, and our path will go as far as our strength will let us.”

Without a communication tool like the newsletter, reflections like this one would only be recorded in research diaries during the process or possibly shared as insights in academic contexts. However, non-academic communication formats like newsletters contribute to building the process narrative in ways that are more accessible to newcomers.

## Leaves

After developing the whole process, some leaves emerged that gave energy to it so that it could continue over time, and also for the tree to grow new roots with which to construct new

processes. As said above, in June 2017, both parties signed an agreement that included the philosophy of the TDLab's work and the relationship between the agencies and the Council, as well as formally recognising the two main dialogue spaces of the process, which were the Intercounty Board (including the Executive Committee) and the Facilitators AR process space. Action researchers participated in both, although with a more relevant role in the second one. In other words, action researchers remained in the institutionalised "new" governance.

At an Intercounty Board meeting where the almost final version of the agreement was drafted (23<sup>rd</sup> February 2017), I recorded a video for the director of Uggasa (CDA of Urola Garaia). This happened almost at the same time as the writing by the council policymaker described before, and by sharing it here, I want to show how communication tools can keep the dialogue going among the participants in AR processes, as well as enhance the voice of the different actors involved in these processes. In my view, the following words represent her interpretation of how conditions were created for leaves to grow on the branches:

"Prozesuaren gauzarik esanguratsuenen artean, nire iritziz, gobernantza eredu berri baterantz pauso eraginkor bat ematearen alde egon den borondatea izan da [...]"

"In my opinion, among the most significant features of the process is the willingness of the Council and the agencies to take effective steps towards new governance. Reaching this framework agreement, only a few months after initiating the process, is the result of hard work on the part of all of us.

The work and role of development agencies have been recognised, and we have built a new and stronger relationship between the Council and the agencies. I would also like to underline that we have worked with a long-term perspective during the whole process. That is to say, our objective has been that the agreement is not something for just one term, but the first step on a long path."

Despite this positive statement, we were all aware that we still faced challenges ahead. The agreement was there, but both parties now needed to demonstrate that the deal was not just "theory", but also practice. This was especially emphasised by the president of the Tolosaldea Garatzen CDA in a video released after the agreement was signed (2<sup>nd</sup> June 2017):

"Konbenioa sinatzerakoan komentatu den gauza garrantzitsu bat da, nahiz eta orain arte egindakoa garrantzitsua izan, lana orain hasten da [...]"

"When signing the agreement, an important message emerged: even if what we have achieved so far is important, the real work has begun today. Now we have to establish a high level of trust among the different parts of public administration (the Council and agencies) to optimise results. That is what we have to do from now on."

On this occasion again we used communication tools to give voice to the actors and to keep the dialogue going in the public sphere. This was done not only by recognising each other and celebrating what had been accomplished but also by sharing views and concerns about potential conflicts of interest and about what was yet to come. Thus, communication contributed to strengthening the roots, i.e., the relationships of trust between the Council and the agencies.

### *Arils (and new branches and leaves)*

The signing of the agreement helped other branches to grow. Here, I will mention one: the facilitators' Industry 4.0 AR process that is still underway and aims to make a diagnosis

of industrial small and medium enterprises in Gipuzkoa to see how they are doing regarding Industry 4.0. The first stage of the process was facilitated by Orkestra and the Council (Innovation department) and started in April 2017 and ended in June 2018.

The result of the facilitators' Industry 4.0 AR process was a diagnostic report based on the dialogue between agency staff and 420 representatives of small and medium enterprises (out of 507 industrial SMEs in the province), which is quite a large number. It also showed how governance worked in practice, and how working collaboratively could help make processes improve.

As we said earlier, yews do not blossom, but instead, they produce arils which contain the seeds for new processes. This is what is happening with the Industry 4.0 process. According to the results of the diagnosis, once the processes responding to the diagnosis started, new actors have been joining the process and have established new processes related to Industry 4.0.

Communication in these contexts is relevant for the dialogue process between participants but can also play a role in integrating outsiders into the process. This was what happened when Julian Müller, an expert in Industry 4.0 visited the TDLab. Once again, I made a video so that we could include his perspective on our process in our collective narrative of the TDLab. I share some of his words that describe this process and which in my view, are like the arils of our yew.

"It is good and well decided that you have direct contact with companies in the field [...] and that different actors work together. [...] different actors from the political level, from the government, from various agencies, and people that work in the same sector, all of whom need to collaborate and find a way of working together."

After a process of more than a decade, as a communicator, I now want to share the results of long-term AR processes aimed at building trust and coordination mechanisms, reaching agreements, and applying good will in specific programmes. However, we need to continue taking care of the roots, i.e., of the relationships of trust, in the same way as we aim to continue producing arils.

## Final discussion

There are different ways in which the living spiral methodology could be used in ARTD processes. One is to build a spiral with the actors in real time. This would show the perspective of stakeholders more directly. However, it would also require stakeholders to be more committed, and that has seldom been feasible in processes with policymakers using ARTD.

Consequently, in order to explore how the living spiral could be applied to ARTD, I have developed my own living spiral, which I have built on the contributions that stakeholders have made through the communication tools I use. I have not asked for any extra effort on their part, which means that my own perspective is strongly implicit in the narrative.

My final discussion focuses on what I learnt when experimenting with the spiral in the context of the AR+ CoLab. Next, I share my reflections on what I learnt about the living spiral methodology. These were part of a blog post made at the AR+ website (Gamester, Teague and Reizabal, 2019):

"CoLab helped me enormously to examine the collective process more deeply and to understand it better through the living spiral, and also to be able to see what the barriers and problems were that we had to face during the process. At the same

time, it was the starting point of a reflection about my own communicator role inside Orkestra's AR Laboratory. For instance, it made me start to think about the way I work, and whether my voice is reflected implicitly or explicitly in the interviews, videos, and so on, I create.

In addition, thanks to sharing the experience with Katie and Jean, and constructing our own collective narrative, I learnt that even though we might be examining different processes, in the end, and with the help of the metaphor, we can find common aspects we all share. This was very important, and helped me to find myself within the diversity of CoLab."

The Living Spiral Framework helps us to understand the process in more depth and how transformation really took place. In this case, it was very constructive for me as a communicator in ARTD to see how relationships between the Council and the agencies were institutionalised. I also learnt how previous communication items could be integrated into a more comprehensive scheme. Literal extracts from different interviews, articles, and videos could all be part of the same narrative.

Notwithstanding all this, I must say that when I produced single communicative materials that were contextualised in the dialogue process of actors (videos, interviews, newsletter articles, etc.), my voice, the communicator's voice, was a weak one. And this was because I put the emphasis on what the actors said and did at that moment. Nevertheless, this shows that integrating a communicator into an AR team, who has a global vision of the project and communicates its news while reflection and action are taking place, can be positive for enhancing the voice of actors and fostering dialogue between them, even if the voice of the communicator is barely present.

The use of the living spiral in this chapter was of a different nature. Here, I did not write while reflection and action were taking place, but later on, in a more elaborate process. Moreover, the living spiral, with its narrative starting in the roots and finishing at the arils, invites us to develop a more comprehensive perspective. As mentioned earlier, the interpretation of the communicator is a strong component in this perspective, and this was new for me.

As to ARTD, I do see potential in this approach. One of its positive aspects is that as a communicator who participates in the process, in some cases, I can communicate, in a constructive way, what actors might find difficult to say. Quite often, when practitioners talk in interviews, videos and the like, the story is sweetened, at least a little bit. As a communicator, I also have access to discussions on the obstacles, invisible aspects and so on of the process which are shared in formal and informal meetings, but not recognised in interviews or posts, with some exceptions. In this respect, I must stress that we never publish these contents without the consent of participants, including this chapter. However, when participants give their consent, the communicator can help make explicit certain features of the process that stakeholders do not openly dare to address but accept that they need to be addressed. These issues are difficult to be discerned by communicators that are not part of the process.

As a final conclusion, I think that from the living spiral method, ARTD can include this new role of communicators, who are not only able to develop on-the-spot communication products, but who are also able to create overarching narratives of the process so as to help build the shared story, and who may also lend a hand by addressing difficult issues in a constructive way.

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## Short Chapter 6

# Being inside and outside the Living Spiral narrative

Thomas Macintyre<sup>1</sup>

### Resumen

#### *La experiencia de estar dentro y fuera de la narrativa de la Espiral Viva*

Colaborar en la escritura y representación de la investigación acción es un proceso fascinante de experimentación y negociación entre diferentes perspectivas en la búsqueda de la verdad y la autenticidad. Esto se vuelve incluso más intrigante cuando diferentes idiomas y culturas se entrelazan. En este capítulo corto, que es el producto de múltiples intercambios con la autora principal Maite, yo apporto algunas reflexiones sobre la manera en que ella ha creado una narrativa en espiral de su trabajo como comunicadora en un proyecto de investigación acción en el País Vasco. Muestro cómo Maite aborda el eterno dilema de equilibrar su rol como persona externa y objetiva —transmitiendo con autenticidad las voces de los actores en las interacciones que ella facilita—, y sus propias formas subjetivas de representar estas voces a través de la metodología de la Espiral Viva. En la medida en que la historia se desarrolla en espiral, se nos recuerda que como en la naturaleza, los procesos sociales son orgánicos y por eso, las relaciones entre las personas y las ideas están en un estado constante de crecimiento y descomposición. Como académicos y actores en la práctica, uno de nuestros mayores retos para entender y promover las transformaciones hacia sociedades más regenerativas es aceptar este proceso vivo, y como la narrativa de Maite demuestra, experimentar con formas nuevas y comprometidas de representar la búsqueda de la que somos partícipes.

### Abstract

#### *Being inside and outside the Living Spiral narrative*

Collaborating in the writing and representation of action research is a fascinating process of experimenting and negotiating different perspectives in the search for truth and authenticity. This is made all the more intriguing when different languages and cultures are intertwined. In this short chapter, which is a product of multiple exchanges between myself and the main author Maite, I provide some reflections on the way Maite has created a spiralling narrative of her work as a communicator in an action research project in the Basque

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Country. This sees Maite address the ever-present dilemma of balancing her role as objective outsider, authentically conveying the voices of the stakeholder exchanges she is facilitating, and her own subjective forms of representing these voices through the Living Spiral methodology. As the spiralling story unfolds, we are reminded that like nature, social processes are organic, whereby relationships between people and ideas are in a constant state of growth and decomposition. As academics and practitioners, one of our greatest challenges to understand and promote transformations towards more regenerative societies is to accept this *living* process, and like Maite's narrative demonstrates, experiment with novel and engaging ways of representing the research we are inherently part of.

## Being inside and outside the Living Spiral narrative

Maite's narrative presents an interesting reflection on how communicators can intertwine their own voice with that of various other actors in an action research process. The narrative does this by employing the Living Spiral framework to present the process of institutionalization of a new governance mode between the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa and the county development agencies from September 2015 to May 2019.

I was immediately struck by Maite's assertion that although she is part of an action research project, she is not an action researcher. She is a communicator, but an active part of the ARTD process, facilitating and communicating the process she is part of. A strong theme of the chapter is straddling the fine line between communicating a process as it is happening, and the interpretive lens through which it is presented in the forms of newsletters and videos by the communicator in the project.

This perennial dilemma of subjectivity is addressed through reflexivity, whereby we review our assumptions and values through reflecting on the work we are doing. It is engaging to view this process unfold as an organic and living process in Maite's chapter, whereby tensions and "hidden" aspects of the multi-actor process are connected, and there is no linear and straightforward development of the case.

This organic—and often messy—nature of social science was what my colleagues and I were trying to address when we developed the Living Spiral metaphor and framework. The Living Spiral can be understood as a social meme (Waddock, 2015), a replicable universal symbol, whereby the spiral is found in many places around the world representing life, death and rebirth. The living aspect signifies the contextualization of this process depending on where it is taking place: in a biological sense, depending on a place's soil, light and water; in a sociological sense, on the people, culture, and norms of that place (Macintyre, 2019).

These aspects we can see in Maite's Living Spiral evolving in the Basque Country, between regional government and development agencies, with the narrative focusing on the interconnection between the different process stages of the project. I was particularly intrigued by the Living Spiral representation of the Yew—a tree symbolic of the case—study region of Gipuzkoa, and how Maite used it to tell her story. Related to the twin objectives of Maite's chapter, I want to (1) comment on the process of telling the story of the process through the use of multi-language quotes, and (2) note the insights of the metaphor for giving insights into transformative practices.

First, I found it interesting to read the start of the policy-maker quotes in Basque, a language I have never heard nor seen before. I sympathize with the desire by Maite and the book team to bring the identity of the region into the narrative. It reminded me, as an English speaker, that this story took place in another language, and in another culture, open-



ing up the richness of AR processes around the world. Such experimentation with language helps decolonise English as a dominating language and way of thinking, allowing other forms of “being” into research arenas.

Second, as a co-developer of the Living Spiral Framework (Macintyre *et al.*, 2018), I was delighted to see the themes which emerged in Maite’s Living Spiral representation. Although Maite noted her struggle in giving voice to actors, while not dominating their voice in how she represented what they said, I see important universal themes in transformative research appear in her local research. For example, the Yew tree takes a long time to grow, and for this reason, if we use it as a metaphor for transformation, has a better chance to lead to long-term, solid processes. Another example is the tree’s development, whereby the regeneration comes from the process itself. The Yew tree has the mechanism to grow roots from top to bottom, thus fortifying the trunk. This is a form of inbuilt regeneration. Building regeneration into transformative processes which are solid and long-term are, in my opinion, essential in socio-ecological transformations in society.

To conclude, Maite’s innovative way of telling the story shows the organic process of transforming the governance of the territory of Gipuzkoa. Maite succeeds in being inside the spiraling narrative of her research, having actively participated in the process, but at the same time being on the outside, giving space and opportunity for actors to provide their voice during the process.

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## Post Experiencial 6

# De la información al encuentro, hacia una comunicación transformadora

*Eleonora Spinelli*<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

*From information to meeting, towards a transformative communication*

Which are the communication processes that we need to promote and encourage action research from a territorial development point of view? How do we foster this through the co-construction with actors and policy makers in our territories? These are a few questions that have challenged me throughout the reading of Maite's chapter and, in this post, I explore a reflection on our own experiences in the Argentinian context, in relation to teaching, research, the management of communication processes, education, gender and territorial development.

### **Resumen**

*De la información al encuentro, hacia una comunicación transformadora*

¿Cuáles son los procesos comunicativos que necesitamos promover y alentar desde el enfoque de la Investigación Acción para el Desarrollo Territorial? ¿Cómo los impulsamos a partir de la co-construcción con actores y actoras decisores y decisoras de políticas públicas, en nuestros propios territorios? Estas son algunas de las preguntas que me han interpelado a partir de la lectura del capítulo y que propongo explorar en este breve texto, pensando desde las propias experiencias y biografías transitadas, en el contexto de Argentina, en relación a la docencia, la investigación y la gestión de procesos de comunicación, educación, género y desarrollo territorial.

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A partir de la lectura del capítulo, y habiendo tenido la oportunidad de conocer un poco de cerca el proceso de Gipuzkoa Sarean, ahora Laboratorio de Desarrollo Territorial, compartiendo espacios de trabajo, diálogos y experiencias en el marco de mi estancia de investigación en Orkestra en el año 2016, es que me animo a acercar algunas reflexiones en torno a lo que Maite expresa, especialmente sobre el papel del comunicador / comunicadora, y de la comunicación misma, en procesos de Investigación Acción para el Desarrollo Territorial.

Las preguntas y las interpelaciones que me atraviesan tienen que ver con la lectura de este texto en diálogo con mi contexto (Argentina), retomando mi propia biografía como docente, feminista, investigadora y gestora de procesos comunicativos vinculados con diferentes marcos conceptuales, metodológicos y políticos como es el caso de la educación, el desarrollo territorial y la perspectiva de género, y que tienen su raíz en las tradiciones del pensamiento latinoamericano.

En este marco, la primera idea que me aparece con fuerza es el propio lugar de la comunicación en los procesos de IADT y los aprendizajes que recupero de toda la tradición que viene desarrollando el equipo de Orkestra en diálogo con actores y decisores de política a diferente nivel, a partir de un trabajo conjunto desde el involucramiento de la academia en otro rol que no es el tradicional (el del *experto* que posee el conocimiento indiscutido). En nuestro caso, en las tradiciones de Argentina, las instancias de comunicación vinculadas a la IA, a la educación popular y a las metodologías como la sistematización de experiencias han quedado ligadas a los micro espacios, más desde los márgenes que por dentro de las políticas públicas, situación incluso agravada por los últimos 5 años de gobierno neoliberal. Con esto me refiero a que las experiencias se quedan en iniciativas de comunicación alternativa en organizaciones comunitarias y populares a pequeña escala.

La discusión entonces desde nuestro contexto y el desafío que me interpela a partir de la lectura del capítulo, está en cómo darles otra entidad a los procesos de comunicación desde el enfoque de la IADT, en la centralidad misma de los espacios de toma de decisiones en diversos ámbitos. Esto supone trascender la mirada de la comunicación asociada a los productos, a la información, a los impactos, a las audiencias, que es lo que en general se espera de

nosotros y nosotras (quienes trabajamos en la comunicación), para recuperar su sentido original, su etimología *communis* que significa poner en común, encontrarse para construir otros relatos posibles y nuevos horizontes y perspectivas de transformación para nuestros territorios. Para asumir estos desafíos quienes comunicamos debemos transformarnos en facilitadoras y facilitadores en la construcción de esos relatos y horizontes posibles. ¿Cómo? nadie tiene la receta, aunque si sabemos que tenemos que recrearnos, escucharnos y hasta quizás invisibilizarnos para que los procesos y las personas que los motorizan tomen la palabra.

Desde ese lugar es que me ha motivado y provocado la lectura de este texto, a encontrar otros lugares posibles, diferentes, creativos y necesarios de una comunicación transformadora.



## Chapter 7

# “Pedagogy of the privileged”? Reflections on how Deliberative Policy Analysis can help action research to foster transformation from within

Ainhoa Arrona<sup>1</sup>

### Laburpena

*«Pribilegiatuaren pedagogia»? Politiken azterketa deliberatiboak ikerketa-ekintzari eraldaketa «barrutik» bultzatzen laguntzeko moduen inguruko gogoeta*

Helburuetan eta oinarri epistemologikoan antzekotasuna izanagatik ere, politikak aztertzeke ikuspegi deliberatiboa (DPA, ingelesezko sigletan) eta ikerketa-ekintza (IE) elkarren arteko dialogorik gabe garatu direla esan daiteke. DPAk interpretazioan eta deliberazioan oinarritutako eta praktikara bideratutako politiken azterketa proposatzen du, politika publikoen mundu konplexua eta politikoa hobeto atzematez gain, erabilgarria eta demokrazia sustatuko duen ezagutza eta prozesuak garatzeko. Era berean, IEk eragileekin dialogoa eta ko-sortzea ezagutza sortzeko eta eraldaketa pertsonal, sozial eta politikorako bide gisa ulertzen ditu. Bi ezagutza arloen artean erlazioren bat egon den arren, duela gutxi hasi dira lotura estuagoa sortzen, politikak aztertzerakoan ikerketa-ekintzaren erabilera areagotzeko beharra nabarmendu duten akademikoek lanen bidez.

Kapitulu honek bi komunitate akademikoek arteko elkarreraginean aurrera egiten jarraitu nahi du, IE eta politiken analisiaren arteko harremana aztertzeke bidea ireki duten lanetan oinarrituz eta Lurralde garapenerako ikerketa-ekintzaren ikuspegian (LGIE) norabide honetan egindako lana abiapuntutzat hartuta. Ikerketa-ekintza, hein handi batean, botere eremuetatik kanpo dauden komunitateekin garatu da. Aldiz, LGIEren ezaugarrietako bat da gobernantza instituzionalizatuetakoko testuingurutan eta eragile eta erabakitzaile publikoekin garatu dela. Hori dela eta, kapitulu hau (erantzungo ez den) galdera baten pean kokatzen da: ea ikerketa-ekintzak aldaketa sustatu dezakeen testuinguru horietan boterea duten eragileekin lan eginez.

Lehenik eta behin, kapituluak ikerketa-ekintzaren —eta zehazki LGIEren— eta politiken azterketa eraldatzailearen arteko lotura zehazten du. Ondoren, DPAk ikerketa-ekintzari eskaintzen dionaren inguruko gogoeta egiten da eta proposatzen du ikerketa-ekintzari eraldaketan laguntzeko marko eta metodologiak eman diezazkiokeela, politika publikoak garatzeko testuinguruetan egiten denean. Bereziki, DPAk politika publikoen

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fenomenoa ulertzeko modu jakin bat eskaintzen duela garatzen da, ikerketa-ekintza erabakitzailer publikoekin garatzen duten ikertzaileei kultura politiko autoreflexiboagoa eta demokratikoagoa eraikitzeke erabilgarri gerta dakiekeena, horrela, «pribilegiatuen pedagogia» garatzen lagunduz.

### **Resumen**

*«¿Pedagogía del privilegiado?»: Reflexiones sobre cómo el Análisis deliberativo de las políticas puede ayudar a la investigación-acción a transformar «desde dentro»*

A pesar de las similitudes en su proyecto normativo y su base epistemológica, el enfoque deliberativo para el análisis de políticas (DPA en sus siglas en inglés) y la investigación acción (IA) parecen haberse desarrollado sin conversar mucho entre sí. El enfoque deliberativo propone un análisis de políticas públicas interpretativo, deliberativo y orientado a la práctica, como forma de capturar mejor el (complejo y político) mundo de las políticas públicas y desarrollar a la vez un conocimiento útil que promueva el desarrollo democrático. De igual manera, la IA entiende el diálogo y la co-generación de conocimiento con actores como metodología óptima de investigación y como un camino hacia la transformación personal, social y política. Sin embargo, y a pesar de que siempre han existido vasos comunicantes entre ambos cuerpos de conocimiento, no es hasta hace poco que han comenzado a entrelazarse a través de académicos que han enfatizado la necesidad de aumentar la adopción de la IA en el análisis de políticas.

Este capítulo pretende seguir avanzando en la interacción entre ambas comunidades académicas sobre la base de los trabajos que han abierto el camino de la exploración de la relación entre la IA y el análisis de políticas y del trabajo iniciado en esta dirección en el enfoque de Investigación acción para el desarrollo territorial (IADT). Si bien la investigación acción se desarrolla principalmente con comunidades que se encuentran fuera de los espacios de poder, una característica de la IADT es que se ha desarrollado en contextos y con agentes y decisores públicos de gobernanzas institucionalizadas. Este hecho hace situar el capítulo bajo la pregunta (irresuelta) de si la investigación acción también puede promover el cambio trabajando en estos contextos y con agentes que ostentan el poder. El capítulo establece primero una relación entre la IA, y en concreto la IADT, y el análisis de políticas transformador. Después, reflexiona y sugiere que los marcos y metodologías desarrollados en el DPA pueden ofrecer herramientas a la investigación acción para promover transformación cuando ésta se desarrolla en contextos de desarrollo de políticas públicas. En especial, el capítulo sugiere que la DPA ofrece una forma de entender y aproximarse al fenómeno de las políticas públicas y su desarrollo que los investigadores en la acción pueden usar para construir una cultura política más autorreflexiva y democrática cuando trabajan con decisores públicos, y contribuir así, a una «pedagogía de los privilegiados».



# “Pedagogy of the privileged”? Reflections on how Deliberative Policy Analysis can help action research to foster transformation from within

## Introduction

Despite their extremely similar normative and epistemological bases, deliberative policy research and action research (AR) seem to have evolved without engaging in much dialogue with each other. It was not until recently that these bodies of knowledge started to become intertwined through the work of certain scholars who highlighted the transformational potential of AR and its *fit* with the challenges and characteristics of today’s society, and who also stressed the need to increase its use in policy analysis (see Bartels & Wittmayer, 2014, 2018a; Li & Wagenaar, 2019b, 2019a; Wagenaar, 2011). For these scholars, AR is part of the Deliberative Policy Analysis (DPA) programme, a research project and also a political one that proposes a type of analysis which is not only better at capturing the nuances of the complex and political world of policy, but also aims to produce usable knowledge that serves democratic purposes. Bartels, Greenwood & Wittmayer (2020) even propose a combined approach of DPA with AR as a means to increase the transformational potential of DPA by strengthening its active engagement in the change of practice.

Inspired by these scholars who opened a path to explore the relationship between AR and policy analysis (i.e. Bartels & Wittmayer, 2018a; Wagenaar, 2011), and based on our latest explorations in Action Research for Territorial Development (ARTD) in this direction (Arrona, 2019; Arrona & Larrea, 2018; Larrea & Arrona, 2019), as well as my own experience<sup>2</sup>, this chapter aims to contribute to advancing in the interaction between the DPA and AR communities. Using as a starting point the dialogue with my co-inquirer in this chapter, Koen Bartels, and his work (see, in particular, Bartels *et al.*, 2020), this chapter delves into the interaction between the two communities by reflecting on the contributions that DPA can offer to AR practice in policy settings. Specifically, this chapter suggests that DPA can provide a lens through which to see the policymaking process and which action researchers can use as a tool for building a more democratic and reflexive policy culture when working with policymakers.

In the second section of the chapter, I discuss how AR relates to transformative policy analysis. In the third section, I focus on AR developed within institutionalised governance settings, since ARTD is characterised by its development *with* policymakers rather than *in opposition* to them. I then delve into how DPA can enhance the potential of AR to contribute to a more self-reflexive and democratic policy culture in section four, before concluding with a brief summary.

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<sup>2</sup> Before starting my PhD, I worked for 6 years as researcher facilitator in Etorikizuna Eraikiz Territorial Development Lab, an action research and collaborative governance process developed with policymakers in Gipuzkoa (Basque Country, Spain), which constitutes the core experience for the theoretical and methodological approach of ARTD. I am once again involved in this project as a researcher (although not as an action researcher). I became acquainted with DPA scholarly work through my PhD, and this gave me a new way of looking at what I had experienced and witnessed over my 6 years of working in policy settings. The following extract of my PhD thesis shows how I described the interaction with DPA related works (Arrona, 2019, p.19): “I formulated some initial research questions that drove me to a literature that I started filtering unintentionally according to its fit with my experience in a policy environment; and that at the same time *led me to read the same experience from new angles and new theoretical glasses* (*‘oh, this explains when...’*).” [italics not in the original]

## The action researcher as a transformative policy analyst

DPA, a term coined by Marteen Hajer and Hendrik Wagenaar (2003) in 2003 in their hugely influential book “Deliberative Policy Analysis: Understanding Governance in the Network Society”, belongs to the post-positivist family of policy studies, which emerged in the 1970s and became one of the major epistemological changes in this field (DeLeon & Vogenbeck, 2007). Post-positivist scholars, who encompass different families and lines of inquiry (see Wagenaar, 2011), criticised the positivist and rationalist perspective that has traditionally dominated policy analysis for its lack of attention to issues such as power and values, which are intrinsic to the world of policy, and for its contribution to technocratic and top-down governance achieved through rational, self-believed, neutral and objective analyses. Instead, post-positivists proposed an analytical programme based on interpretive ways of knowing that is contextual, addresses power issues and aims at promoting individual autonomy and alternative relationships between institutions and citizens (DeLeon & Vogenbeck, 2007; Fischer, 2007; Ingram & Schneider, 2006; Yanow, 2000). More specifically, DPA proposes a type of policy analysis that is practice-oriented, interpretive, and deliberative (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003), and includes scholars who combine these three dimensions with different degrees. Proponents of this type of analysis argue that not only does it have intrinsic moral value but also that its epistemology has greater validity in the complex, plural and uncertain world of policy.

Indeed, although policy studies have a normative character, different understandings of what role the analyst should play can be found (DeLeon & Vogenbeck, 2007; Enserink, Koppenjan, & Mayer, 2013; Goodin, Moran, & Rein, 2006; Howlett, Ramesh, & Perl, 2009). These vary depending on the policy model which frames the researchers’ work, their view on the policymaking process and the role of knowledge in it (Enserink *et al.*, 2013; Diane Stone, Maxwell, & Keating, 2001). In DPA, the analyst is “more a facilitator than a policymaker or designer” (Howlett *et al.*, 2009, p. 28), and a “facilitator of public learning and political empowerment” (Fischer, 2003a, p. 224). Moreover, as Fischer & Mandell (2012) argue, whilst conventional facilitation does exist in policy analysis which focuses on first-order issues, deliberative approaches propose a more critical facilitation that involves making implicit beliefs and values explicit, as well as questioning and reframing them. The values and beliefs underlying policies and the behaviour of actors are often the root of the problem when it comes to alternative courses of action. These policy analysts are, in the words of Fischer and Mandell (2012), *transformative policy analysts*. As Li & Wagenaar (2019b, p. 1) posit:

Policy analysts are no longer advisers selling ideas to their clients at the “top”. Instead, deliberative analysts attempt to assist and mediate between relevant policy actors, helping them to articulate their views, deal with disputes, and develop and implement possible collaborative actions.

AR can be considered a transformative policy analysis approach when developed in policy settings. Furthermore, as an interventionist, interactive, evolving and pragmatic approach that deals with a wide range of actors, AR not only captures the emergent and changing nature of time and policy problems but also deals pragmatically with complexity and the differences in value to reach agreements (Wagenaar, 2011, Ch. 10). In AR “analysis does not precede and guide action (...), but emerges interactively, pragmatically, and deliberatively with it” (Forester, Kuitenbrouwer, & Laws, 2019, p. 2).

In my view, the following words from a policymaker who collaborates in an ARTD process convey very well this very same idea (Arzelus, 2018, p. 154):

AR has allowed us to address problems that previously had become entrenched. The outsider perspective of researchers has helped us to talk frankly and even harshly about issues that previously were not treated successfully, probably due to the fear of making explicit the existence of conflicting perspectives. We have brought about change and, together, we have managed conflict from a new perspective. We have also learnt to deal with complexity: it is no longer valid to flee from it or simplify it. Hence, the scenario and the actors are the same, but the rules of the game have changed.

### Transforming from *within*?

In their initial reflections that later derived in a substantial body of work on AR and policy analysis (see Bartels, this book), Bartels & Wittmayer (2014) noticed that AR is seldom used in policy analysis. However, if we understand policy analysis in a broad sense, i.e., as “a variety of activities concerned with the creation, compilation, and application of evidence, testimony, argument, and interpretation in order to examine, evaluate, and improve the content and process of public policy” (Dryzek, 2006, p. 190), we could probably find that many AR experiences around diverse policy issues actually do that. Thus, rather than a lack of AR practice in policy settings, it could be a lack of dialogue between the research communities that contribute to policy analysis and to AR.

And what seems to be rarer is practice developed together with policymakers within institutionalised processes. In fact, whether AR should engage in formal institutional decision-making processes or remain outside (or *in opposition to*) is a contested issue. For some scholars, the adoption of AR by large institutions entails a risk of co-optation and instrumentalisation of research that could damage the AR’s democratic aspirations in seemingly participatory practices (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2008; Greenwood & Levin, 2007, Ch. 17; Reason & Bradbury, 2008, Ch. 49).

But do AR processes developed in institutionalised governance contribute to change, or do they merely help to maintain the *status quo*? One can find studies that argue in favour of one position or another, and it can still be difficult (at least for me) to take a position in this debate, since the results of change processes are usually long-term and also very subtle if put in a wider macro-change perspective. Nevertheless, we could think that “the pedagogy of the oppressed must be matched by a pedagogy of the privileged if we are to move our world towards justice and sustainability” (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 700). This means that both working with the marginalised and also working *within* to change mainstream institutions and organisations are relevant. Although policies can be affected and influenced in many different ways from the outside, government institutions still play a central role in policymaking. For this reason, analysts and researchers need to engage with those (public officials, politicians) who are part of formal decision-making and implementation processes if they want to have any influence on them (Wagenaar, 2011, Ch. 1). Otherwise, it would mean “to condemn AR to the poverty-stricken margins of the world system” (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p. 264).

ARTD has, in fact, developed its practice in policy settings with governments, as described in the introductory chapter of this book. As any AR approach, it follows a social change agenda that is particularly oriented to fostering participatory forms of governance for socioeconomic development. One of its features is that researchers maintain a continuous dialogue with policymakers and co-create spaces that constitute the core of collaborative governance among different policy actors, developing a kind of *collective research and praxis* (Ginsburg & Gorostiaga, 2001) where the limits between the two are fuzzier than in other types of AR. As described by one of the policymakers who worked with ARTD (Arzelus, 2018, p. 154) “the relationship between researchers and practitioners could be defined as a cross-border relationship”. Using the distinction by Bartels (2012, p. 447), we could say that rather than *communities of inquiry* built

in spaces created by the researchers, in ARTD, researchers act in (and facilitate) *communities of practice* where action (policies) and knowledge emerge from the interaction between policy-makers and researchers in specific “quasi” every-day practices and situations.

Understanding how the policymaking world works and how research can have an influence towards more democratic practices is especially relevant for action researchers who, like in ARTD, work inside “the corridors of power” (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 700), but also for those who work outside trying to influence and change policies by other means. In this sense, post-positivist and deliberative policy analysis can provide action researchers with insights into how to impact these policy settings.

DPA can provide frameworks and methodologies to promote collaborative and participatory policymaking and governance processes. As participation in itself does not guarantee transformation and democratisation, action researchers must become aware of the risks and challenges that institutionalised modes of engagement entail (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2008; Greenwood & Levin, 2007, Ch.17). So what should collaboration in policymaking towards systemic changes look like? Many works by DPA scholars have focused on alternative ways of policymaking, delving into the different dimensions involved in the co-inquiry processes between policy actors, such as conflict resolution (Forester, 2006, 2009), transformative learning (Fischer & Mandell, 2012), or collaborative policymaking (Innes & Booher, 2003, 2010) that aims at systemic changes and transformation. All of them provide analytical frameworks and methods that can assist action researchers, who play multiple roles in their facilitation work (Bartels, 2012; Bartels & Wittmayer, 2018b; Costamagna & Larrea, 2018), when fostering participation and AR processes among policy actors.

Furthermore, as I argue in the next section, DPA can provide theories and concepts which can foster a policy culture that is more aware of the complex and conflicting nature of policy processes and this culture in turn can also be one more element that contributes towards a more democratic way of engaging in policymaking.

### **Building a more a “self-conscious policy culture”**

Action research processes take place in particular institutional contexts and belong to specific policy domains with their own dynamics. Thus, to propel change, this type of contextual dynamics needs to be understood and acted upon both through researchers’ and practitioners’ knowledge and experience, because they belong to the specific arena of intervention. However, the understanding of the broader, albeit more abstract picture of policy dynamics, i.e., how policies are produced, reproduced or performed can also constitute a powerful tool in AR practice, not only for sense-making purposes but also for building awareness of the nature of policymaking among policy actors (thus empowering them).

Policy studies have developed a large body of literature that has tried to understand what makes up policymaking and governance. Despite there being different ways of looking at policy processes, most researchers and practitioners have been very influenced by a “high modernist,” rational, stage-based, and instrumental account of policymaking (Goodin *et al.*, 2006; Hoppe & Colebatch, 2016). For a long time now, an account of policymaking, which is seen as a process that is developed in stages where delegated actors make rational choices and decisions which are later implemented, has formed the common-sense approach (Colebatch & Hoppe, 2018; Hoppe & Colebatch, 2016).

Instead, DPA works give an account of a policy world that is complex, decentred, open-ended, emergent, contested, and socially constructed; and which is driven by ideas, interests, power, and emotions. We have learnt from these studies that policies are not only shaped by formal institutions but that they are also partly developed in spaces which exist in “institutional voids” (Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003, p. 9), i.e., where it is very difficult

to trace any specific decision moment or decision agent (Goodin *et al.*, 2006; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003). These works also show us that policies are characterised by complexity, time, and pluralism (Wagenaar, 2011, Ch. 10); in other words, they are emergent—and unpredictable—properties and are products of “complex networks of actors and objects” (p. 451) and are shaped by different incommensurable moral values that are in constant conflict. And as the world of policy is unavoidably also a world of conflict, hence, policymaking is also a type of bargaining, “about who gets what” (Goodin *et al.*, 2006).

We have also learnt that policymaking has a discursive and persuasive nature which involves constantly defining and redefining ideas and arguments (Fischer, 2007; Pérez-Lejano, 2013; Stone, 1989; van Eeten, 2007). And moreover, that people—policy actors in this case—try to interpret reality and make sense of it by reducing its complexity through, among others, frames and narratives (Hajer & Laws, 2006; Pérez-Lejano, 2013); we have learnt that stories and narratives are not only a sense-making schema which can help develop actors’ understanding and define their actions but also tools for establishing policy agendas and structuring devices with which policy coalitions, networks, and communities are organised (Goodin *et al.*, 2006; Hajer & Laws, 2006; Pérez-Lejano, 2013; Stone, 1989). Furthermore, we know that policymaking not only involves bargaining, persuasion or argumentation, but also practice. *Practices*, or in other words, the everyday work of policymakers, are also political: they embody and produce institutions, and they shape policies as much as any formally established strategy (Freeman, Griggs, & Boaz, 2011; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003; Laws & Hajer, 2006; Wagenaar, 2004; Wagenaar & Cook, 2003). We have learnt, too, that framing and structuring problems is of utmost importance for policymaking since it significantly determines how their solution is defined and who participate in solving them (Hisschemöller & Hoppe, 1996; Hoppe, 2010). In this sense, we know that policymakers tend to *tame* problems and see them as simple because this gives them a sense of control (Hoppe, 2010).

To sum up, we have learnt that policymaking, far from being a technocratic endeavour carried out in a world governed by instrumental rationality, should become more attuned to the participatory modes of democracy. In other words, the complexities and pluralism of the world of policy, the interdependence of actors facing them, the uncertainty around any policy issue, and the need to include different kinds of knowledge require that policymaking processes should be collective, collaborative, and participatory processes, where deliberation, communication, collective learning, joint responsibility, concrete problem-solving, and trust building are also fundamental aspects (DeLeon & Vogenbeck, 2007; Goodin *et al.*, 2006; Hajer & Wagenaar, 2003; Innes & Booher, 2003).

AR mainly fosters *self-managed change processes* based on stakeholders’ knowledge in order to produce change. Nevertheless, *expert* knowledge of researchers can play a relevant role in co-generating knowledge and addressing the issues at hand (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, Ch.8; Karlsen & Larrea, 2018). The use of expert knowledge and the role of theories vary in each AR practice (see Dick, Stringer, & Huxham, 2009), but the implicit and explicit theories that researchers bring to the dialogue are relevant and influential despite the focus being on local knowledge. Moreover, local knowledge can be partly drawn from mainstream widely held views of a particular issue, like the widespread perception that policy processes are processes carried out in stages, based on rational choices and that expert advice is relevant for finding the best solutions. Hence, (in my view) an interesting question is: could breaking this widespread idea, which is aligned with and promotes top-down governance models, be a part of the *pedagogy of the privileged* (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 700) when working with power holders?

Action research does play a pedagogical role, which is mainly practice-based, through direct involvement in specific problems and situations. The following words from a policymaker with whom we collaborate in an ARTD process are an excellent example of this:

When you start working in collaboration, you also start sharing your power. And that needs to be learnt. Even though you might have taken a political decision to collaborate, you need to learn... (...) for example, one thing we have learnt with the researchers is to make conflicts explicit<sup>3</sup>.

Undoubtedly, he refers to learning that occurred in practice, when interacting and dealing explicitly and consciously with conflicts. However, this practice learning was preceded and accompanied by frameworks that raised awareness of the relevance of acknowledging the conflicts in territorial development, as well as the need to deal with them, which is an idea that is at the very core of ARTD (see more on conflict in ARTD in Karlsen & Larrea, 2014b, Ch.2; Larrea, 2019; Larrea & Arrona, 2019).

Indeed, ideas and concepts are part of the co-construction of collective responses (Karlsen & Larrea, 2018). But although concepts are not used as unquestionable truths—they are only one more element in ARTD processes—, they help collective sense-making and feed and enrich the dialogue between policymakers and researchers for developing collective responses (see, for example, Larrea, Estensoro, & Sisti, 2018, and Karlsen & Larrea, 2018). If research can provide interpretive settings that contribute to sense-making among policy actors who do not share the same vocabulary (Hajer & Laws, 2006), in AR, at least in ARTD, theoretical concepts can also be used for doing so (Karlsen & Larrea, 2018).

In this sense, the way we understand and conceptualise the policy process is important: theories and disciplinary knowledge, as argued by Colebatch & Hoppe (Colebatch & Hoppe, 2018; Hoppe & Colebatch, 2016), have a *performative* role, a power to influence policy practices through specific accounts of policy activities that practitioners partly draw on. The way in which an issue is framed or conceptualised is relevant since it has the power to co-produce that very same issue, even if the experiential accounts of practitioners regarding their own practice may differ.

Hence, concepts, theories, and abstract ideas drawn from research do have a framing, performative, and even pedagogical role to play in AR, and can be used (and are used) to raise awareness and change how things are usually done: “Many times what we do is close our eyes and look the other way... No, let’s put conflicts on the table and let’s talk and, quote unquote, not waste our time”<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, which account of the policy world researchers either explicitly or implicitly put on the table *is* relevant.

ARTD has recently started to introduce some DPA inspired ideas in its academic works and practice. Larrea & Arrona’s (2019) article is one such attempt in which we shared some concepts with the policymakers to address a conflict that emerged in the AR process. The article describes how one of the authors (Miren Larrea, editor of this book) noticed an unresolved conflict among the policymakers and consequently, used some ideas from DPA to make sense of the situation and share and discuss it with policymakers. It was very interesting to see in the dialogue that, after sharing the ideas of *pluralism* and *agonism*, one of the policymakers said “Yes, I think this is happening in this process, but it also happens in all the processes that we work on” and “we also have them [pluralism and agonism] inside our organisation<sup>5,6</sup>”. The terms not only helped this policymaker to make sense of the particular situation they were addressing, but it seems that they provided her with a new lens to view her everyday work and intervention in a different manner. This policy actor gained awareness of the pluralism that characterises her everyday activity.

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<sup>3</sup> Words from a policymaker in Arrona, Karlsen, & Larrea (2020).

<sup>4</sup> Extract from an interview with a policymaker.

<sup>5</sup> Extract from the transcription of the recording of the meeting.

<sup>6</sup> The name of the organisation has been substituted by “organisation” for confidentiality issues.

Although this example may seem to be almost insignificant, in my opinion, it offers a glimpse into the contribution action researchers can make in building a “reflexive, self-conscious policy culture” (Goodin *et al.*, 2006, p. 7) which breaks with a rationalist, linear, and technocratic account of policy processes that may still prevail in government institutions and the administration.

## Concluding remarks

Intervening in policy arenas, even more so when engaging directly with policymakers, poses specific challenges for action researchers who can learn from policy scholars dealing with change, collaboration, and transformation in policy settings and who have developed theoretical work and methodologies with this aim. In ARTD, we have already started to seek insights from these works to improve our theory and practice. In this regard, this chapter contributes to ARTD by presenting the action researcher as a transformative policy analyst and by reflecting on how theory can also enhance transformation when working with policymakers.

This chapter has discussed that building awareness among power holders of the, *inter alia*, conflicting, uncertain, and complex nature of policymaking can be a contribution that action researchers who work with policymakers could make towards a more self-reflexive policy practice, which in turn may contribute to transformation. In order to do so, DPA accounts of the world of policy that challenge the traditional ways of seeing the governing process and policy work offer relevant insights which can be integrated into the dialogue with policymakers.

Beyond its contribution to ARTD, this chapter aspires to engage with the wider AR community that works in policy settings and to contribute to the debate initiated by my co-inquirer in this chapter, Koen Bartels (see Bartels, this book), amongst others. As Greenwood (2007) asserts, each AR practice is unique because it depends on the skills, experience, and ideological position of the researcher. Moreover, each action researcher will find inspiration in the theoretical works that better fit his or her values, and his or her understanding of the world and concrete experiential practice. But in my view, DPA scholars constitute an excellent community with whom action researchers can discuss and learn in their shared endeavour of transformation: because not only can action research increase the transformative potential of deliberative policy analysis (Bartels *et al.*, 2020) but also vice versa.

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## Short Chapter 7

# Back and Forth between Action Research and Deliberative Policy Analysis

Koen Bartels<sup>1</sup>

### Resumen

#### *Idas y vueltas entre la Investigación Acción y el Análisis Deliberativo de las Políticas*

En esta breve reflexión, argumento que la investigación acción (IA) y el Análisis Deliberativo de las Políticas (ADP) tienen mucho que ofrecerse mutuamente y se beneficiarían si se exploraran en más profundidad sus raíces compartidas y sus programas analíticos. Hasta ahora, he estado principalmente involucrado en la exploración del repertorio metodológico que la IA ofrece para responder a las ambiciones de intervención y transformación del ADP. En vez de esto, Ainhoa Arrona reivindica que es el ADP el que provee a la IA con aproximaciones al desarrollo de políticas que son más complejas, argumentativas e inclusivas. Sugiero que los esfuerzos para seguir integrando la IA y el ADP deberían enfocarse en el desarrollo de aproximaciones crítico-relacionales para la transformación del sistema de las políticas, con el objeto de hacerlas más sostenibles.

### Abstract

#### *Back and Forth between Action Research and Deliberative Policy Analysis*

In this brief reflection, I argue that Action Research (AR) and Deliberative Policy Analysis (DPA) have a lot to offer each other and would benefit from further exploring their shared roots and analytical programs. Up to now, I have mainly been involved in explorations of the methodological repertoire that AR offers to meet the interventionist and transformative ambitions of DPA. Instead, Ainhoa Arrona claims that DPA provides AR with more complex, argumentative and inclusive approaches to policy-making. I suggest that efforts at further integrating AR and DPA should focus on developing critical-relational approaches to transforming policy systems towards greater sustainability.

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## Back and Forth between Action Research and Deliberative Policy Analysis

Over the past years, I keep finding myself going back and forth between Action Research (AR) and Deliberative Policy Analysis (DPA). As a policy analyst, I felt intuitively drawn to DPA. Not because it has a simple message—to be honest, as a student I initially struggled quite a bit to grasp its sophisticated framework—but because it helps to make sense of the bewildering world of policy. Policy issues—be they climate change, pension systems, urban planning, or health and social care—are incredibly complex and bring a range of actors together, whether they like it or not, to somehow advance the public interest. This is not just done by elected politicians and top civil servants in traditional policy arenas, but through a kaleidoscope of people, interactions, networks and places. Policy processes are far from rational, linear processes; they involve radical uncertainty, interdependence, value pluralism, conflict and argumentative practices. Therefore, Hajer & Wagenaar (2003) proposed DPA as an approach to facilitate everyone involved in policy practice to engage in deliberative processes of joint reflection, learning and decision-making. This makes DPA very much an interventionist and transformative approach. Yet, while working from this DPA background, I was unhappy with my ability to make a difference in practice and felt that I lacked the methods to do so. This is why I turned to AR.

It turned out many other policy analysts were doing the same. AR was curiously absent from the field up to a decade ago. But now, seven conference panel sessions<sup>2</sup>, a symposium (Bartels & Wittmayer, 2014), an edited volume (Bartels & Wittmayer, 2018), and a special issue (Li & Wagenaar, 2019) later, we have a growing community of policy analysts who use and see AR as key to pursuing their transformative ambitions. Throughout, the focus has been on what AR had to offer to (deliberative) policy analysis. Adopting a diversity of approaches—including collaborative learning, transition scientivism, systemic co-inquiry, reconstruction clinics, policy fiction, and ARTD—the consensus is that AR offers a rich methodological repertoire that creates exceptional opportunities for experiencing the intricacies of policy practice and stimulating reflexivity, learning and change. It helps us to move beyond the mere critical orientation of most post-positivist approaches in policy analysis and develop a more realistic sense of what it actually takes to generate policy change.

It has been interesting to see how Ainhoa Arrona has asked the opposite question: not what AR has to offer to (D)PA, but what has DPA to offer to AR? She claims that ARers do not seem to engage a lot with policy makers because of their tendency to collaborate with marginalised group to challenge hegemony. DPA, she argues, shows that we need to let go of conventional models of policy-making and adopt a much wider, inclusive understanding of who makes policy, where and with whom. By raising awareness of the uncertain, interdependent, conflictual and argumentative nature of policy, DPA helps AR to move beyond a crude counter-hegemonic stance towards a “pedagogy of the privileged”—moving from a “what is” vs. “what ought to” stance to what Avelino & Grin (2017) call a “what can be” approach. Moreover, Arrona argues that DPA can do so by providing a range of deliberative approaches for creating “interpretive settings to contribute to sense-making among policy actors that previously don’t share meaning and have shared vocabularies”.

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<sup>2</sup> Held each year since 2013 at the Interpretive Policy Analysis (IPA) conference and/or the Standing Group for Theoretical Perspectives in Policy Analysis at the European Consortium of Political science Research (ECPR) conference.

So, it appears that DPA and AR have a lot to offer each other. So much so that someone at a 2018 panel session devoted to this topic remarked that it almost seemed a non-question because they are so much alike. Integrating DPA and AR can provide a range of approaches and practices for better treading the “tightrope of transformation and instrumentalization” when trying to generate policy change (Bartels & Wittmayer, 2014). Chapters in the book Julia Wittmayer and I edited (Bartels & Wittmayer, 2018) discuss, for instance, ways to create “sanction and sanctuary” in collaborative governance, engage in “soft resistance” in territorial development, or combine empowering marginalised farmers with deliberating with power holders. These approaches demonstrate not only what kind of policy change is feasible within the scope of an AR project nested in hegemonic policy systems, but also how we can create trajectories for sustainability transitions: fundamental transformations of societally embedded and reproduced structures, cultures and practices.

It is important to recognise the fundamental synergies in the moral-analytical programs of AR and DPA in this respect. Both have their foundations in classical pragmatism, a philosophy committed to creating thriving democratic societies through joint inquiry into everyday problematic situations. This, Julia Wittmayer, Davydd Greenwood and I argue in a recent article (Bartels *et al.*, 2020) is done based on a critical-relational approach that acknowledges that we exist in association to each other and seeks to transform hegemonic socio-political institutions that inhibit us in making our interdependence fruitful. An ongoing back and forth between AR and DPA in the future could help to further advance this shared critical-relational approach in order to transform policy systems towards greater sustainability.

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## Post Experiencial 7

# La investigación acción y los procesos políticos deliberativos para transformar nuestros sistemas regionales de innovación

Leandro Lepratte<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*Action research and deliberative political processes to transform our regional innovation systems*

For those who study how to change the linear logics of knowledge production of science and technology institutions from a territorial perspective, the chapter gives a political transformative vision. The question about whether action research processes developed in institutionalized governance structures contribute to change —or help maintain— the status quo is a crucial issue, if we want greater critical and democratic reflexivity in regional innovation systems in Latin America. Finally, the transformative role of deliberative political processes is a path of dialogue within post-positivist approaches on sociotechnical problems.

### Resumen

*La investigación acción y los procesos políticos deliberativos para transformar nuestros sistemas regionales de innovación*

Para quienes estudiamos cómo cambiar las lógicas lineales de producción de conocimientos de las instituciones de ciencia y tecnología desde lo territorial, el capítulo nos aporta una visión transformadora desde lo político. La pregunta sobre si los procesos de *investigación acción* desarrollados en estructuras de gobernanza institucionalizadas contribuyen al cambio o ayudan a mantener el status quo, es una cuestión crucial si queremos una mayor reflexividad crítica y democrática en los sistemas regionales de innovación en América Latina. Finalmente, el papel transformador de los procesos políticos deliberativos es un camino al diálogo con perspectivas post-positivistas sobre problemas sociotécnicos.

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Espacios de diálogos junto a actores vinculados a ciencia, tecnología e innovación en el proceso de Desarrollo Territorial de Rafaela.

El capítulo de Ainhoa Arrona aporta nuevos aprendizajes, provoca procesos de reflexión crítica y deja abiertas posibilidades de investigación y praxis en diálogo con otros enfoques.

Desde la perspectiva de los aprendizajes, resulta un aporte relevante para quienes estudiamos cómo lograr que las políticas científicas, tecnológicas y de innovación logren potenciar procesos de cambio tecnológico y transiciones sociotécnicas en el plano territorial en América Latina. Una región que requiere fortalecer y consolidar sus estructuras y modelos de gobernanza con un sentido democrático y pluralista. Y la gestión de la ciencia y tecnología no se encuentra al margen de este desafío. Que, a su vez, es interpelada por sus dificultades para propiciar cambios y revertir situaciones sociales y económicas complejas y con fuertes desigualdades territoriales.

Para quienes estudiamos sistemas regionales de innovación (SRI), nos aporta también elementos para potenciar reflexiones críticas sobre modelos y procesos de definición de políticas en los territorios. Y es en este ámbito que, junto a los diálogos que venimos planteando con Pablo Costamagna y Miren Larrea en el marco del caso de Rafaela (Argentina), se suma este aporte de Ainhoa Arrona. Que abre paso a pensar de qué manera podemos articular las dinámicas y trayectorias sociotécnicas con el desarrollo territorial. En especial, con una perspectiva de mayor apertura y deliberación orientada a la praxis transformadora desde lo político.

Es decir, al esfuerzo de cómo hacer más reflexivas las dinámicas entre actores de los sistemas regionales de innovación, este capítulo le incorpora la dimensión democrática como un proceso de cambio cultural que requiere de pensamiento crítico.

Un cambio cultural que, de acuerdo con Arrona, y pensándolo desde nuestro ámbito de investigación y praxis, debe interpelar no sólo a los hacedores de políticas, sino también a empresarios, científicos y tecnólogos, y la ciudadanía en general. Y en este sentido, el rol de los *investigadores actores* resulta crucial para generar espacios de diálogo y articulaciones sociotécnicas multinivel desde los territorios. Un esfuerzo transformativo que sin dudas requiere repensar las políticas de innovación en Latinoamérica.

La pregunta de Arrona, sobre si los procesos de *investigación acción* desarrollados en estructuras de gobernanza institucionalizadas contribuyen al cambio o ayudan a mantener el



status quo, es una cuestión central si queremos una reflexividad crítica en los sistemas regionales de innovación, en su co-construcción y co-generación de capacidades. En particular, en aquellos que evidencian actores institucionales del sistema científico y tecnológico guiados por incentivos y lógicas lineales de producción y transferencia de conocimientos. Lo crucial aquí es considerar, basándonos en el capítulo, que la investigación acción puede introducir procesos de ruptura en las lógicas planificación y gestión de la ciencia, la tecnología y la innovación en los territorios. Lógicas que aún se basan en supuestos de racionalidad instrumental y modelos lineales en América Latina.

Finalmente, la perspectiva post-positivista que asume, y su apertura al diálogo con otras tradiciones en un esfuerzo inter-ontológico deja abierta las posibilidades para estimular nuevos diálogos, en mi caso con los estudios sociales de la tecnología y la innovación.



## Chapter 8

# Action Research for City Development: the case of Bilbao

*Miren Estensoro*<sup>1</sup>

### **Laburpena**

#### *Hirien garapenerako ikerketa-ekintza: Bilboren kasua*

Orkestrak garaturiko lurralde garapenerako ikerketak ekintzak (LGIE), lurraldea, maila anitzeko unitate moduan ulertzen du. Maila anitzeko ikuspegi honek, ordea, hirien berariazkotasuna ez du kontuan hartzen. Benetan maila anitzeko ikuspegia txertatzen duen LGIEk lurralde maila bakoitzaren ezaugarriak txertatu behar ditu ordea. Kapitulu honetan hiri mailan jartzen dugu arreta, hiria, maila anitzeko testuinguruan, lurralde garapenerako espazioa moduan aldarrikatuz eta ulertzen lagunduz.

Honakoa da kapituluak erantzuten duen ikerketa galdera: zein dira, maila anitzeko testuinguruan, hiri garapenerako ikerketa-ekintza prozesuak fasilitatzeko erronkak? Lurralde garapena sustatzeko maila anitzeko gobernantza eraiki nahi badugu, hirietan lan egiteak zer suposatzen duen ulertu beharra dugu.

Bilbao Next Lab proiektuan ikerketa-ekintza prozesua fasilitatzearen esperientzian oinarritzen naiz ikerketa galderari erantzuteko. Bilboko udalarekin lankidetzan garatzen dugun ikerketa-ekintzako proiektu hau 2013an hasi genuen. Espezializazio adimendunaren bitartez hiriaren garapen sostengarria bultzatzea da helburua. Hiriko garapen ekonomikorako agentzian lanean ziharduten politika-egileek (Bilbao Ekintzan) espezializazio adimenduna bultzatzeko gobernantza parte-hartzaileko ereduak eraikitze beharra onartzen zuten. Politika-egile hauek dira gobernantza eredu horien eraikuntza fasilitatzaren dutenak. Gure paperak, ikertzaile aktore eta «fasilitadoreen fasilitadore» izanik, eraikuntza horretan lan egiteko gaitasunen garapena bultzatzean datza.

Kapituluaeren emaitza den eredu analitikoak lau dimentsioz osatzen da. Dimentsio hauek hiri garapenerako ikerketa-ekintzari dagozkio eta Bilboko ikasketetatik eratortzen dira: eskala, boterea, erakundearen konplexutasuna eta hiri arteko lehiakortasuna. Ikerketa-ekintza prozesua fasilitatzeko erronka ezberdinak azaleratzen dira dimentsio hauetako bakoitzean. Erronka horiek kudeatzeak LGIEk aldarrikatzen duen lurralde garapeneraren maila anitzeko ikuspegia garatzea dakarki. Honakoak dira ikasketak eta hauei dagozkien aukerak: (i) hiri-aglomerazio eta kontzentrazioaren abantaileri probetxua ateratzeko eraikuntza kolektiboko

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prozesuak fasilitatzea eta prozesu paraleloak ekiditea (ii) gutxiak irekitze bitartez eta hiriko politika egileen botereari etekina ateraz botere gutxien duten eragileak ahalduntzea (iii) koordinazio horizontala medio, gaitasunen eraikuntza prozesuak erakundean zehar zabaltzea ahalbidetuko duen antolaketa-eraldaketa bultzatzea, eta (iv) gainerako lurralde mailekiko elkarrekikotasuna eta lurralde garapeneko erronkak azalerazteko hirietako politika-egileengan berebiziko arreta pizten duten rankingak erabiltzea.

## **Resumen**

### *Investigación Acción para el Desarrollo de Ciudades: el Caso de Bilbao*

La aproximación de investigación acción para el desarrollo territorial (IADT) desarrollada por Orkestra concibe el territorio como una unidad multiescalar. Sin embargo, esta definición de multiescalaridad no recoge la especificidad de las ciudades. El argumento central en este capítulo es que una comprensión verdaderamente multiescalar de la IADT requiere entender la unicidad de cada nivel territorial. Este capítulo contribuye a entender el nivel urbano como un espacio para el desarrollo territorial en un contexto multiescalar.

Con el objetivo de avanzar en dicha comprensión, el capítulo propone la siguiente pregunta de investigación: ¿cuáles son los retos a la hora de facilitar procesos de investigación acción para el desarrollo urbano en un contexto multiescalar? Si el objetivo es construir una gobernanza multiescalar para el desarrollo territorial, necesitamos entender cuáles son las implicaciones de trabajar en las ciudades.

Respondo a la pregunta de investigación basándome en la experiencia de facilitar un proceso de investigación acción en el proyecto Bilbao Next Lab. Este proyecto se desarrolla en colaboración con el Ayuntamiento de Bilbao desde 2013. Su principal objetivo es impulsar un desarrollo económico sostenible en la ciudad mediante la especialización inteligente. El equipo de hacedores de políticas de la agencia de desarrollo económico de la ciudad (Bilbao Ekintza) reconocía la necesidad de construir nuevos modelos de gobernanza participativa que permitan avanzar hacia la especialización inteligente. Son estos hacedores de políticas quienes facilitan la construcción de dichos modelos de gobernanza y nuestro rol, como investigadores actores y desde una posición de «facilitar a personas facilitadoras» se centra en apoyar el desarrollo de sus capacidades para que puedan trabajar en dicha construcción.

El modelo analítico que resulta de este capítulo recoge cuatro dimensiones que caracterizan a la investigación acción en ciudades y se extraen de los aprendizajes en Bilbao: escala, poder, complejidad de las organizaciones y competitividad interurbana. La investigación acción se topa con diferentes implicaciones con respecto a dichas dimensiones y es la gestión de esas implicaciones la que contribuye a desarrollar el componente multiescalar del desarrollo territorial reivindicado por la IADT. Se trata de (i) facilitar procesos de construcción colectiva para aprovechar las ventajas de la concentración y las economías de aglomeración evitando procesos paralelos, (ii) empoderar a los actores más débiles mediante procesos de apertura gradual y sacando provecho al poder de los hacedores de política de la ciudad (iii) impulsar cambios organizaciones que extiendan la construcción de capacidades a toda la organización mediante una coordinación horizontal, y (iv) utilizar los rankings de ciudades para explicitar retos para el desarrollo urbano y la necesidad de reciprocidad con el resto de escalas territoriales.

# Action Research for City Development: the case of Bilbao

## Introduction

Cities are increasingly attracting the attention of researchers and practitioners who work in territorial development and competitiveness. Their relevance has grown due to the world-wide urbanisation process and because challenges for urban development differ from other processes within non-urban territories.

The ARTD (Action Research Territorial Development) approach developed by Orkestra views territory as a multiscale concept. However, Karlsen and Larrea (2014), who based on Albuquerque (2012), define multiscale in ARTD as encompassing all countries' administrative divisions, i.e., regions, provinces, counties, and municipalities, do not specifically mention cities. One of the contributions of this chapter to ARTD is that it studies cities as spaces for territorial development in the context of multiscale (including the sub-regional level, and particularly, the city level). My experience with *smart specialisation strategies (S3)* at the sub-regional level may provide some insight into this matter.

Each of the territorial scales has its own features and roles within territorial governance, and one of the challenges is to understand the specific place of cities in that puzzle. This is the aim of my chapter: to find out what particular features of cities facilitate territorial development processes in them when interpreting territories from a multiscale perspective. My main rationale when addressing the specificity of cities as spaces for ARTD is that certain features of AR processes are accentuated in cities because of their scale and diversity.

To be able to go through this understanding process, I propose the following research question: what are the challenges when facilitating action research for urban development in a multiscale context? If the aim is to construct multiscale governance for territorial development, we need to understand the implications of working at the city level. I answer this question based on my experience as an AR facilitator in Bilbao Next Lab (BNL). BNL is an AR project developed together with the City Council of Bilbao whose objective is to promote smart specialisation in the city.

The case analysis has enabled me to build an analytical framework consisting of four elements, which correspond to the dimensions that I want to highlight from the case and that serve to explain how we faced the challenge of facilitating AR for the city's development. The first element refers to the scale issue of cities. Agglomeration economies are a key factor for city development but also a challenge for participatory approaches like AR which aim to give voice to all those with a stake in the issues addressed. The second element is related to the first one but focuses on the power issue. Urban policymakers are powerful players compared with other local authorities, and from the AR point of view, they are more used to using power *on behalf of* citizens or other local actors such as SMEs, than using it *with* them. Facilitating AR in cities requires that action researchers manage this power play appropriately, and this invites us to reflect also on the power acquired by researchers working within these processes. The third element concerns the size and institutional complexity of organisations created ad hoc to foster development in cities, such as specific agencies or the city council itself. This complexity becomes more evident when comparing them with other organisations at the local/municipal level within non-urban areas. Carrying out AR with city policymakers very often requires changes in the organisational arena, making facilitation more complicated. And last but not least, the fourth element corresponds to the global hierarchy of cities and competitiveness among them. City policymakers are particularly challenged to promote the competitiveness of their city and to design strategies to achieve a relevant position in global rankings. This pressure to fare well in rankings is not as strong in other local areas where ARTD is implemented.

When doing AR with cities, we constantly have to choose between seeking a global status or prestige of the city and the well-being of its residents.

The chapter is structured as follows. After this introduction, the second section delves deeper into my ARTD roots and provides a literature review on the role of AR in the city development literature. The third section describes the case of BNL, focusing on my challenges as a facilitative researcher in that project. This experience allowed me to construct the analytical model presented in the fourth section, where I also reflect on the implications for multiscalarity and AR facilitation of each of the elements composing the framework. In the last section, I offer some concluding reflections.

### **My ARTD roots: a multiscalar approach to territorial development**

My main argument in this section is that ARTD, from its inception, has taken a multiscalar territorial approach, but this approach has, on the one hand, focused in practice on multiscalarity within regions. On the other hand, no specific attention has been paid to cities. To be specific, the city level has not been differentiated from the general municipal level before. This chapter addresses these two gaps and contributes to a more comprehensive approach to multiscalarity in ARTD.

Karlsen and Larrea (2014), following Albuquerque (2012), define *territory* as the “actors that live in a place with their social, economic and political organisation, their culture and institutions as well as the physical environment they are part of,” and *territorial development* as a “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 shows how the process perspective is intrinsically integrated into the term *territorial* within ARTD. Moreover, these authors advocate the importance of considering a multiscalar approach, which means that the connections between levels must also be understood.

This multiscalar approach is linked to the systemic one. In fact, the ARTD approach includes elements from the systemic view (Larrea, 2019). However, my aim with this chapter is not only to contribute to AR but also to the regional and urban development literature. The multiscalar approach is key to the latter and, for this reason, it is the central approach in this chapter.

The multilevel approach of territorial development is also described in the policy brief we wrote in collaboration with the European Commission, entitled “Multilevel governance for smart specialisation: basic pillars for its construction” (Larrea *et al.*, 2019). This document follows the argument presented by Estensoro and Larrea (2016) that bottom-up governance modes encouraged by S3 can be developed by more diverse (and sustainable) constellations of actors if regional governments collaborate with sub-regional ones. In the brief, our proposal did not stop at the regional level, and we argued for a comprehensive multiscalar approach that starts from municipalities and ends in European Commission policies.

The territorial approach of ARTD I develop in this chapter is framed both by Karlsen and Larrea’s reflections on the different territorial levels inside regions (region, province, county, municipality) and by the European level policies presented in Larrea *et al.* (2019). With this chapter, I further extend our knowledge on ARTD in that I focus on cities, which was the missing scale in the previous two works.

Policies such as S3 should integrate, according to ARTD, a multilevel approach. However, the role of cities is still understudied, although many authors claim the urban perspective should be included in these policies (Bevilacqua and Pizzimenti, 2016; EP, 2016; Capello and Kroll, 2016; Radosevic *et al.* 2017; Grillo, 2017; Serbanica and Constantin, 2017; Rivas, 2018; Aranguren *et al.* 2018:22). As mentioned before, the urbanisation process taking place all over the world means increasing the weight of cities within the territorial debate.

Furthermore, many authors have stressed the value of action-oriented research for city development (Forester *et al.*, 293; Reardon *et al.*, 1993; Foth and Adkins, 2006; Gandía and Cena, 2018), and particularly, for Smart City development (Maccani *et al.*, 2014; Suopajärvi, 2016; Tompson, 2017; Lim *et al.*, 2018). My contribution to the literature is a proposal that AR can be used as a strategy to delve deeper into the understanding of city development processes. In particular, I reflect on the specificity of facilitating AR in urban contexts, comparing it with non-urban territories, which no scholar has addressed yet.

Most of the existing literature underlines the suitability of specific features of action-oriented methodologies; the need for a collaborative approach when developing action-oriented knowledge (Lim *et al.*, 2017) and for involving local actors right from the beginning of the process when the shared problem is defined (Maccani *et al.* 2014); the importance of understanding the participants' perspective regarding why the cases evolved and emerged in the way they did (Tompson, 2017; Gandía and Cena, 2018); the need to transform power relationships in order to facilitate real public participation (Suopajärvi, 2016), or the challenge of building effective partnerships and developing a holistic understanding (Foth and Adkins, 2006). However, although these features have been studied in the context of cities, they are not presented as specific features of them. Moreover, they could be considered as valuable features for action-oriented approaches in other territorial contexts. By answering the research question, I aim to incorporate certain features that are exclusive to cities into ARTD.

Most projects developed under ARTD have addressed the roles of regional and local policymakers, adding an interesting nuance: although cities were conceptually incorporated into the local level, city policymakers did not develop AR processes together with the rest of policymakers. Thus, trying to understand city policymakers is not only a conceptual challenge but also an attempt to adapt ARTD to them.

So, let us continue the journey with another question: what are the challenges of playing the role of the facilitative researcher in city development contexts?

## **The case: Bilbao Next Lab**

### *The AR context*

Bilbao Next Lab may be defined as the AR laboratory of Bilbao's smart specialisation strategy. Since the start of its activities in 2013, its goal has been to facilitate, by means of smart specialisation (Foray, David and Hall, 2009; Foray, 2016), the economic transformation of the city towards sustainable urban development. Smart specialisation is a policy framework fostered by the European Commission whose aim is to find ways to increase the scale and effectiveness of territories' indigenous potential. Its origins are lie in the European Commission's Europe 2020 Strategy for "smart, sustainable and inclusive growth", but many other countries around the world have adopted it. It is a bottom-up approach for boosting growth and jobs, in which opportunity innovation areas are prioritised through a shared vision with local actors, including citizens. The case analysis in this chapter focuses on the period from October 2016 to March 2019. I took charge of the coordination of the AR project in October 2016, after three years of co-coordinating the project with another colleague from Orkestra. Likewise, in 2016, the City Council asked the director of Bilbao Ekintza (the City Council's local economic development agency, hereafter BE) to be the policymaker in charge of following up and monitoring the project. These changes led to redefining the goals and structure of the laboratory.

The three main challenges or "shared problems" (Karlsen and Larrea, 2014) addressed by BNL in this period were: (i) the limited capabilities of the Bilbao Ekintza team to fulfil their

role as facilitators of the specialisation process; (ii) the lack of a shared vision for smart specialisation among the different councillors and members of the Mayor’s Office in the City Council, and (iii) the lack of mechanisms for articulating multilevel governance and, consequently, the need to define the role of Bilbao’s strategy within the broader RIS3 strategy of the Basque Country. City policymakers had to face the challenge of facilitating smart specialisation using a new policymaking approach, while we, as researchers, had to play the role of “facilitators of facilitators” through the AR laboratory.

The diagram below shows the spaces that form the AR laboratory and where the challenges described before are managed. In each space, specific AR projects and processes with specific actors are developed. Researchers and policymakers contribute with their knowledge to activating and establishing action-reflection cycles based upon the specific contents created for each space. Co-generated knowledge enables policymakers to implement strategies using different tools, and researchers conceptualise this knowledge in order to contribute to the academic community. The diagram also shows the connections between the spaces. The connection between the different AR spaces is also facilitated by Orkestra, which makes it possible to develop a global AR vision and process.

**Figure 1. AR spaces within Bilbao Next Lab**



*Tractor Group*: this is the space where the main goals of BNL are established and from which the rest of the spaces are monitored to ensure a global vision. The Tractor Group is made up of representatives from the Bilbao Ekintza (BE) Management Team together with Orkestra researchers, and it meets every week.



*Facilitators' space*: this space, which is formed mainly by Bilbao Ekintza's area coordinators and technical staff, seeks to help agency professionals develop facilitation capabilities. Researchers facilitate this development by organising monthly AR workshops to reflect on their facilitator roles and to help design the pertinent facilitation actions.

*City Council*: this space focuses on addressing the challenges faced by the City Council and, in particular, its Area of Economic Development, Commerce and Employment when facilitating the specialisation process. Other City Council area representatives also participate in some of the meetings organised by this space in order to construct a shared vision among the different council areas within the smart specialisation strategy.

*Local Group*: this is a space for urban and regional smart specialisation strategies, which brings together urban, provincial and regional government authorities, regional research centres and think tanks, universities, the provincial chamber of commerce, cluster associations, as well as private firms and entrepreneurs. The objectives are the following: (i) to articulate and improve policies and initiatives related to the priorities of the said strategies; (ii) to conceive strategic projects that support them, and (iii) to contribute to building a shared vision of all the agents involved in these strategies. Orkestra participates as a member of the Local Group but also supports its facilitation, which is carried out by the BE managers and a team of professional facilitators. We reflect with them on their facilitation challenges, and we help them make decisions regarding facilitation actions.

*S3 research projects*: in this space, different research projects related to smart specialisation are carried out by representatives from the city, county, province and regional governments, together with researchers. Orkestra facilitates the construction of a shared vision and also learning from each other so that specific collaboration and articulation mechanisms are developed among the different research projects.

*European projects*: the aim of this space is to foster the co-learning of the different cities and territories involved in urban development policymaking. This space saw an increase in its activity with the participation in different European calls (such as H2020), where Orkestra has also been involved as partner and promoter.

*Academic community*: here, researchers participate in internal research team meetings and academic conferences and workshops, etc., to work on the conceptualisation of the co-generated knowledge and on related academic publications, such as this chapter. Furthermore, this conceptualisation allows re-defining new challenges within the laboratory spaces and benefits other processes taking place in the various research projects.

## **Lessons learnt when doing AR regarding the specificities of cities**

This section contains four subsections which narrate the four episodes of BNL that inspired the discussion on what is different when facilitating AR for city development and in which my facilitation challenges are described. The episodes include literal extracts from statements made by policymakers and researchers involved in the AR process. This information has been taken from meeting minutes and my notes.

### ***Scale increases transformation potential but makes facilitation of collective construction processes more difficult***

The scale issue is a distinguishing element when facilitating AR for city development. By *territorial scale*, we refer to the set of actors and related relationships that exist within a specific geographical demarcation. Apart from concentrating population, cities bring together

the headquarters of several territorial institutions and stakeholders which also bring their resources and assets with them. The area of influence and the objectives of most of these actors exceed the city's borders. Consequently, their ability to get involved in city development processes can result in them influencing the development path of broader territorial areas.

By way of illustration, the greater Bilbao metropolitan area concentrates 39.3 % of the Basque Country population (Eustat, 2019), and in 2019 Bilbao Ekintza had an annual budget of EUR 30.5 million, 24 times the average yearly budget of any local development agency in the Basque Country<sup>2</sup>. In line with this, if we look at the different "local actors" forming the Local Group, we may see that three government levels—three of the four Basque Country's universities, the Basque Government Innovation Agency, and one of the two regional technology corporations—make up this group.

Moreover, agglomeration economies attract diverse territorial actors (governments, firms, entrepreneurs, universities, etc.). The transformation potential of urban areas, which host all these actors, is bigger if compared with non-urban territories. However, one of the main challenges when facilitating AR within cities, which is related to agglomeration economies, is the management of diversity. Taking advantage of agglomeration requires a type of facilitation that integrates diversity, more than, for example, in other industrial and rural areas where ARTD has been implemented. These other areas are usually more homogeneous. And when diversity is very high, the risk is that these processes become merely informative rather than dialogical. AR facilitation has to avoid this and has to take care of the collective approach meaning to respect the participatory and collective character of the process.

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As explained above, the Local Group has the explicit goals, among others, to construct a shared vision among the actors involved and to coordinate and improve the policies and initiatives. Therefore, it also aims to develop shared agendas. In the next paragraphs, I will share an example of how, during a meeting, participants were inclined to share their different views but were not so keen on building a collective strategy.

We had designed a group dynamics to be able to discuss, within the Local Group, the shared messages and instruments that could be developed to build a common branding strategy. But participants spent most of the time sharing their organisations' view on the branding strategy as well as their opinions regarding the messages' features and the criteria for selecting an audience for the branding activities. The facilitators of the meeting (the agency's director and the consulting firm staff) let this discussion continue rather than sticking to what was scheduled on the agenda.

The director of Bilbao Ekintza in a briefing synthesised the meeting outcome as follows: "We did not have time for the group dynamics, but people were very participative" (Nora Sarasola, 07-02-2018).

I felt that the agency had received enough feedback to improve the branding strategy, but there had been no time for co-designing. I presented this as a methodological challenge:

"The methods we use for facilitating the meetings are our tools to achieve our facilitation goals... we have the power to select them so that we can have the power to decide on the result of the meetings" (Miren Estensoro, 07-02-2018).

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<sup>2</sup> The average has been calculated taking away the agencies from the three capital cities Bilbao, Donostia and Vitoria-Gasteiz (Garapen, 2019).

The case of Bilbao shows that one of the implications of the scale issue has to do with the need to avoid parallel processes and take advantage of the attraction of cities to foster collective construction processes for territorial development in a multiscale framework. Furthermore, the specificity of ARTD conducted in cities regarding this dimension does not mean that agglomeration automatically translates into a participatory policymaking approach and pursuing a collective aim. Action researchers have to exert pressure towards this collective dimension, and the diversity of actors makes this a more complex endeavour.

### *City policymakers are more powerful than other local policymakers*

The scale issue and the resulting concentration of population, actors and agglomeration economies make cities powerful stakeholders within the regional, national, and global context. Although policy competences within territorial development usually do not belong to city governments, city authorities' capacity to influence "higher" policymaking spaces is often greater than the rest of sub-regional governments. City policymakers are therefore powerful decision-makers compared to other local governments in the territory, sometimes even having as much influence as regional policymakers.

A common challenge refers to city policymakers using power on behalf of local actors. The share of citizens or any other actor, such as firms, who are involved in city development policymaking processes, is usually much smaller than in any other local context because the number of different actors in cities is higher. Thus, in bigger scale contexts such as cities, policymakers can justify non-participatory approaches more easily. In this sense, AR can contribute by introducing empowerment mechanisms and encouraging their use.

Moreover, the attractiveness of cases such as Bilbao to international institutions like the European Commission or the academic community shows the capacity of cities to claim the role of the local level in multiscale governance for territorial development.

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In terms of the use of power, different challenges emerge in AR processes developed in urban contexts compared to other processes developed at the local level. One of these challenges is that the large number of actors makes participatory processes too complex and very often induces policymakers to decide on their own.

The goal of the facilitators' space, apart from developing new governance modes through AR to foster smart specialisation, was to develop a new policymaking approach. The agency started to take decisions together with the local SMEs and entrepreneurs in order to, for example, prioritise the technological fields for smart specialisation. Considering the number in absolute terms of SMEs located in a medium-sized city like Bilbao, such multi-voiced dialogues might seem unfeasible. However, AR processes can help integrate these firms into an entire system where the lessons learnt are shared with a wide group of participants, making these processes possible.

Futurable is the name of the pilot entrepreneurial discovery process (EDP) facilitated by Bilbao Ekintza which explored specialisation opportunities within the wearable technologies field. One of the main challenges addressed in the action research workshops facilitated by researchers within the facilitators' space was to make EDPs sustainable.

The focus of one workshop was on designing facilitation actions that would contribute to the sustainability of the EDP, which had to do with sharing decision making with the involved actors (entrepreneurs, firms, technological centres, educational and training centres,

and the agency at that moment). One of the actions later carried out was that participants shared the decision about the specific technological fields in which wearable technologies would be developed, and that they jointly decided which actors would take part in the following meetings dealing with those technological fields (mainly potential firms demanding this technology).

The following comments from the agency staff shows how the process was rationalised and viewed as being meaningful even though we were reaching only a few SMEs:

“What really matters is the quality of the information we gather, not the quantity... actors can help us filter the criteria in order to obtain valuable information”  
(Agency staff, 11-10-2017)

Although participation may be limited at first to a small number of city actors, its figure can later be multiplied if opinions on how to open the process for participation are shared (for example, which other actors should be engaged). As researchers who facilitate these processes, our role is to make policymakers aware of the value of sharing their power with local actors. City development challenges require producing change within different actors so as to include those with less power but with invaluable knowledge. Their involvement in decision-making processes, even if they are complex processes, will contribute to solving these challenges in a more effective way.

In order to institutionalise these dynamics, another challenge is to extend these practices to the rest of the city organisation. This is related to the following lessons learnt.

### *Organisational complexity is higher in city governments and agencies*

Solving urban development challenges requires a systemic and integrative approach in policymaking. Integrating different departments of city councils or agencies is thus a critical challenge. Horizontal coordination implies achieving a broader consensus when making relevant decisions as well as increasing the capacity of any development process to reach a wider range of stakeholders and solve complex challenges. However, it usually also entails redefining the facilitation and decision-making procedures and bodies since agreements are not easy to reach due to difficulties and conflicting interests. For this reason, significant changes are required in deeply ingrained cultures and internal dynamics. Furthermore, in urban contexts, the large size of city development agencies makes this challenge even more complicated.

### **THE EXPERIENCE IN BNL**

Processes such as Futurable, which I discussed in the previous section, led to the conclusion that BNL needed new governance modes to be able to foster smart specialisation. Futurable, thus, required changing the role of the local development agency and, accordingly, its way of working. Its goal was no longer to offer services to individual firms or entrepreneurs but rather to facilitate a dialogue space where the agency could carry out a continuous and open dialogue with city actors to establish common strategies and priorities. In this case, the role of facilitative policymakers was to transform the everyday work of this agency, which has more than 100 employees and a wide variety of departments, and to challenge its organisational culture. This is yet another specificity of working with city policymakers: organisations are bigger, and size is often correlated with complexity.

After seven action research workshops dealing with the Futurable process, the Tractor Group decided that the facilitators' space had to be opened to other relevant areas of the agency such as entrepreneurship, talent development, or internationalisation. The policy instruments used by these areas could also contribute to smart specialisation, and the new policy culture created by BNL should be extended to them. Hence, the facilitators' space was further expanded in order to involve the coordinators of those different areas. When discussing the features of the facilitation mode that each smart specialisation project would require, the need for a transition towards a more horizontal structure of the city agency became clear.

This was made explicit by the staff and myself, the action researcher in the process:

*It is necessary to foster transversal dynamics among the different areas and to create transversal groups of facilitators... (agency staff, 19-06-2018).*

*The challenges our projects need to solve are very complex, so we need to reflect this complexity too (researcher, 19-06-2018).*

In the next workshop, it was decided that members from different areas would participate in these transversal groups of facilitators and that each group would have the capacity to define their own facilitation approach. The agency's CEO and the human resources department engaged in this process to create the right organisational conditions (shared projects and budget among different areas, analysing possible changes in leadership positions and responsibilities, etc.) that would enable this transformation.

The case of Bilbao shows that AR can contribute to enhancing city development through organisational change and by fostering horizontal structures in public organisations. In this respect, we can conclude that ARTD conducted in cities very often is confronted with the need to facilitate organisational change processes in the agencies involved, which are often characterised by having many large teams and, consequently also, a deeply rooted and less changeable organisation culture.

Territorial development processes, apart from requiring multiscalar governance, also need different actors belonging to various sectors and parts of the society to get involved. Horizontal coordination within each government level included in the multiscalar governance is one of the mechanisms to facilitate this engagement. And the lessons learnt in fostering horizontal coordination among complex city organisations can be valuable for the rest of governments' levels as well.

### ***Cities compete among themselves more explicitly than other local entities or regions***

One of the consequences of the evolving model of capitalism has to do with a global urban hierarchy and competitiveness (Krels and Ietri, 2015). Cities, also small ones like Bilbao, are paying more attention to their position in global rankings that are dominated by megacities such as New York, London or Tokyo that are used as benchmarks in the competition for capital and talent.

City policymakers very often concentrate all their energy on positioning their cities in these indexes and rankings instead of focusing on city development strategies. Thus, we can conclude that the need for dealing with global indexes and rankings is one of the specificities of ARTD conducted in cities. One of the potentials of this specificity is that indexes and rankings can be used as tools to bring urban development challenges to the surface. We, as action researchers, can use them as detonators of negotiation processes when establishing common challenges.

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Due to urbanisation in the global economy, cities have started to compete with each other to attract talented people and investors. Global city rankings reflect this competition, and to be able to facilitate AR processes with city policymakers, we very often have to deal with these rankings. However, the objective of action researchers facilitating city development processes is also to improve the well-being of city residents. Therefore, AR processes developed with city policymakers need to demonstrate not only their contribution to the well-being of city residents but also to obtaining higher positions in urban competitiveness rankings.

In a meeting of the City Council group, where different city councillors participated to discuss the main challenges to foster urban smart specialisation strategies, one of the researchers mentioned a talent ranking of Spanish regions. Its total index consisted of different aspects such as talent generation, attraction, development, and retention as well as skills and knowledge. The Basque Country held the fourth position in the total ranking but the seventeenth position in talent attraction. A long debate followed about the reasons why it occupied this position, and this discussion continued through emails.

One of the decisions that came out of this discussion was to start a new action research process to promote talent development and attraction through vocational education in which the regional government and the employment agency would be involved. Although the region's position in the ranking helped to kick-start the AR process, it also served to include among its goals a democratic skills development action plan so that citizens with different educational backgrounds could have access to it. Moreover, it was about involving other government levels to address a common challenge.

On the other hand, it is also true that in the "urban era", cities tend to focus only on other cities forgetting the rest of the territory. This case shows that even though rankings might not initially be on action researchers' agenda, they must be aware of the importance these rankings have for policymakers. Through dialogue, goals for city development processes can be established that promote both citizens' well-being and climbing positions in the global urban context.

Likewise, it is about opening our minds and recognising the role and contribution of different territorial levels to city development processes. This means that effective management of urban competitiveness can contribute to fostering reciprocity within a multiscale framework. Reciprocity means that the different levels mutually recognise each other as relevant actors and that multiscale governance is not seen as a threat (Larrea *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, it also means that AR in city development faces the challenge of building reciprocal relationships among different territorial levels.

## Concluding reflections

From its inception, ARTD has followed a multiscale territorial approach, but without paying specific attention to cities. The argument is that a more comprehensive and multiscale perspective of ARTD requires understanding the specificity of each territorial level. In this chapter, I discuss the city level as a space for territorial development in the context of multiscale.

Following the lessons learnt in the Bilbao case, four dimensions seem to characterise the singularity of cities: scale, power, organisational complexity, and intercity competition. AR identifies different implications and challenges related to the facilitation of these dimensions. Efficiently managing these implications can contribute to multiscale in territorial development processes as claimed by ARTD. Table 1 shows the elements that compose the analytical model: the dimensions that facilitate AR in city development processes and contribute to multiscale governance for TD.

Singularity of cities	BNL experience	Challenges and implications of AR facilitation	Contribution to multiscalarity in ARTD
Scale	A tendency to create participatory spaces but with no co-construction	To facilitate a collective construction process seeking collective interests and taking advantage of agglomeration	Taking advantage of city density and attraction avoiding parallel processes
Power	Justification of non-participatory approaches as an easier way	To distribute power among the weaker actors or empower them gradually, opening the processes to participation	Direct contact with the regional, national and supra-national levels
Organisational complexity	Need to increase facilitation capabilities throughout the city development agency	To introduce organisational changes, taking a critical perspective, in bigger and less changeable organisations	Fostering horizontal coordination among different governments
Urban competitiveness	City policymakers pay attention to global rankings	To distinguish between the worldwide status or prestige of the city and its residents' well-being and use indexes and rankings to make urban challenges explicit	Reciprocity in mutual recognition between different territorial levels

In conclusion, this chapter shows that facilitating AR in city policymaking can contribute to the multiscalarity of territorial development processes. This means that we, as action researchers, have to help city policymakers open their eyes and encourage them to openly discuss, reflect on, and improve their work through action research. However, very often, this also depends on the personal commitment of each specific policymaker. And these are the people that any action researcher wishes to work with.

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## Short Chapter 8

# Action Research Challenges for Urban Development: from Bilbao to Montreal-North

Isabel Heck<sup>1</sup>

### Résumé

#### *Défis de la recherche-action en développement urbain: de Bilbao à Montréal-Nord*

Ce chapitre aborde les défis pour la recherche-action dans le développement urbain tels qu'identifiés par Estensoro (ce volume) dans son analyse du projet Bilbao Next Lab. Nous discuterons de la pertinence de ces défis pour un cas montréalais, le Plan d'aménagement du Nord-Est à Montréal-Nord. Après une courte présentation de celui-ci et de son modèle de recherche action, dans lequel la mobilisation des connaissances vise à réduire les inégalités sociales, nous soulignons quelques différences et similarités avec l'expérience de Bilbao. Alors que certains défis s'appliquent clairement au cas montréalais, ceux de l'échelle et de la compétitivité globale doivent être adaptés et élargis pour correspondre à des cas qui concernent des arrondissements plutôt que des villes.

### Abstract

#### *Action research challenges for urban development: from Bilbao to Montreal-North*

This chapter engages with the challenges for action research in urban development identified by Estensoro in her analysis of the Bilbao Next Lab (Estensoro, this volume), by applying them to a case in Montreal, the Northeast Development Plan in Montreal-North. After a short presentation of the Montreal case and its action research model, which mobilizes knowledge to reduce social inequalities, differences and similarities with the Bilbao experience are outlined. While some of the challenges clearly resonate in the Montreal case, the issues of scale and global competitiveness have to be adapted and broadened to apply to cases on a borough rather than on a city level.

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## Action Research Challenges for Urban Development: from Bilbao to Montreal-North

In response to Miren Estensoro's analysis of the challenges for action research (AR) specific to urban development, I wish to share how her results resonate in my experience, in an urban setting on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. Our cases share the fundamental facts that we are both action researchers located in off-center research units and involved in urban socio-territorial development. We are also both advocating collective and participative processes and decision-making in our practice. However, the scale of our projects, their purpose, the stakeholders involved and to some extent our roles as researchers differ. I welcome the opportunity to have this conversation across our differences to reflect on common challenges and possible ways to overcome them.

Over the last six years, I have been working as a researcher within *Parole d'excluEs* an anti-poverty organization in Montreal, Canada, which develops projects and mobilizes knowledge to improve living conditions in low-income neighborhoods of the metropolis. A variety of stakeholders, including citizens experiencing poverty and exclusion, practitioners and directors in civil society groups, the local administration and institutions, are involved in elaborating and implementing these projects. *Parole d'excluEs*, as its name suggests, influenced by South American movements, calls for the inclusion of the marginalized to develop solutions to social inequalities and values their knowledge and experience, along those of practitioners and researchers. A research unit inspired by Brazilian models, Anglo-Saxon and Quebecer traditions of researchers' involvement in communities (Almeida, 2010; Longtin, 2010; Fontan, 2011), the University Incubator of *Parole d'excluEs*, has been created to support knowledge mobilization through AR in this experience. Researchers have contributed to the co-construction and analysis of innovative projects and collaborative methods since its beginning more than ten years ago (Fontan *et al.* 2013; Fontan and Heck, 2017; Heck, 2017), and are now seen as partners of territorial development.

Over the last years, our research unit has developed a partnership with the administration and network of community organizations in the borough of Montreal-North, a culturally diverse and low-income neighborhood of the metropolis with a population of over 80,000. The administration of the borough, through its director, has adopted a collaborative stance and formed several agreements with community partners to work and decide together on the most pressing issues. Urban (re)development being one of its priorities, we have been involved in this project since 2018.<sup>2</sup> As researchers, we critically assess the methods and effects of the Northeast Development Plan (*Plan d'aménagement du Nord-Est*), and we participate, as the other territorial actors, in the design of the participative process, its facilitation and the co-construction of projects themselves.

Now, how do the challenges of scale, power, complexity and competitiveness from Bilbao Next Lab (BNL) resonate in the context of the Northeast Development Plan in Montreal? The project is still ongoing, the analysis is therefore preliminary.

The Montreal project is not multiscalar in the same sense as the Bilbao Next Lab as it is locally restricted to one urban neighborhood; however, it does include a variety of actors on different levels, from residents to directors of community groups to the local administra-

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<sup>2</sup> The research team includes also Juan-Luis Klein (UQAM, Geography), as well as Mathilde Manon and Pascale Monier as research assistants. Funding for this project has been provided by the *Arrondissement de Montréal-Nord*, the *Service aux collectivités de l'UQAM* and the *Fonds de recherche société et culture du Québec*.

tion and elected officials and integrates a high degree of diversity. AR has had a facilitating role in constructing a shared vision of the territory among the stakeholders. Co-construction in the processes seems strongest among those actors who closely participate and form the coordination team. They are from various organizations at the community level and the local administration. Despite some initial differences, they have, over time, built a shared understanding of the goals, limits and priorities of the project. A broader circle of actors is included in collaborative spaces on specific topics or dimensions where the inclusion of a greater diversity of viewpoints is essential. While the time frame of these spaces rarely allows deep co-construction, they help to gather elements for building a shared vision, which are put together and polished by the coordinating team, then adjusted and validated by the larger community to complete the participative process. These issues are related to scale but refer more directly to challenges of inclusion and diversity, which might be seen as more encompassing challenges equally characteristic of urban settings.

The second challenge, power, is closely linked to the third, complexity. Both are present in any metropolitan urban context bearing hierarchy and inequalities. In the Montreal case, the most influential territorial actors are explicit on their willingness to share power and decision-making through participative methods; collaborative spaces are facilitated to empower less influential actors, specifically citizens. Despite a largely shared vision of horizontal methods and their application among the promoters of the project, some inequalities remain and AR needs to take the power variable into account. While inequalities might be stronger in urban contexts because of multiple hierarchical levels, and ask for specific adaptation for AR, power is a challenge AR needs to consider in any process of co-construction.

The challenge of changing organizational culture within bigger and complex institutions has been expressed on several occasions by members of the local administration during our research. In our case, the borough's director herself has assumed leadership in advocating change, through actions such as making members from different divisions work together or being explicit that it is upon citizens rather than her employees to state their wishes for their living environment. AR had little to do with these changes in this case. However, in absence of such an ally, ingrained institutional practice is a without any doubt a major challenge for implementing transformation through AR.

Finally, as considerations for global competitiveness ratings do not apply to our case at the borough level, I would like to reframe this challenge for our conversation and widen it to what we could call the inside-outside tension. In the BNL, this would refer to the tension between development for the well-being of citizens (inside) and the global prestige of the city (outside). Montreal-North in the media is often associated with crime and gang violence, there is a considerable amount of effort at all levels to renew and improve the image of the borough (outside). However, to go further, a transformation of its living conditions, which are statistically among the lowest in Canada, appears fundamental (inside). The Northeast Development Plan finds itself in a tension between critical assessment of its approach, leading to adjustments to strengthen the impact of the project on the neighborhood, and the willingness to present the project as a successful innovation contributing to a new image for Montreal North. Awareness of this tension, in the Montreal and Bilbao case, might lead to a dynamic where territorial actors build on both and this could ultimately lead to a greater impact.

Reading our experience through a lens developed out of a very different context has been a stimulating exercise which has illustrated parallels but also specificities of each context. I had to adapt two of the challenges identified by Estensoro to apply them to our case, mainly because, although in an urban context, the Montreal case is not on the city level and thus represents a different scale. I would welcome to carry on the conversation on challenges of facilitating action research for territorial development in urban context.

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## Experiential Post 8.1

# The critical-collaborative role of action research – tensions and potentials

Mikaela Vasstrøm<sup>1</sup>

### Resumen

#### *El papel crítico-colaborativo de la investigación acción – y tensiones y potencialidades*

En un mundo crecientemente global, complejo y conflictivo, la investigación acción tiene varios papeles importantes que jugar. El desarrollo social del futuro —tanto urbano como rural— necesitan considerar aspectos como la sostenibilidad, la justicia para asegurar la legitimidad social y la resiliencia ecológica. La investigación acción es una búsqueda para abrir las perspectivas del desarrollo y replantear trayectorias ya existentes a través de la co-creación de conocimiento entre múltiples actores. Esto requiere de la investigación, por una parte, facilitar espacios de colaboración a través de escalas verticales y esferas horizontales; pero, por otra parte, requiere también cuestionar de forma crítica la participación pública en sentido amplio y la legitimidad, la sostenibilidad y la justicia del desarrollo visualizado.

### Abstract

#### *The critical-collaborative role of action research – tensions and potentials*

In an increasing global, complex and conflictual world, action research has several important roles to play. Future societal development – urban as well as rural, need to consider issues of sustainability, as well as justice to ensure societal legitimacy and ecological resilience. Action research is a search for opening development perspectives and readdress exiting trajectories by co-creating knowledge with multiple actors. This requires research roles that both facilitate spaces for collaboration across vertical scales and horizontal spheres, but also critically questions the broader public participation and legitimacy, as well as the sustainability and justice of envisioned development.

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Reflection of the bridge to the newly developed Barcode area in Oslo and different praxis and network “spheres”. A perspective from the action researcher position as critical and collaborative tensions between potentials and challenges and bridging multiple actor-network understandings of development.

In Chapter 8, Miren Estensoro unfolds the potentials and challenges of working with action research in urban development. The paper discusses that action research for city development is a complex process that requires reflexive spaces for both researchers and practitioners at several institutional levels and across different sectors. Based on these discussions, and my own action research experiences of working with citizens and local and regional officials, I reflect on the dual role of action research: the *facilitative/collaborative* and the *critical*. Action research is a constant balancing act between, on the one side, facilitating collaborative spaces and bridging actors across spheres and scales, and on the other side, sustaining a critical research position to challenge and reframe existing understandings and practices. Such collaborative and critical research engagement can create tensions and challenges for both researchers and practitioners (Johnsen and Normann, 2004), in relation to the researchers’ position and legitimacy. The understanding and enactment of different research roles in different phases of a project should therefore be developed reciprocally among the involved actors – to generate long term trust and legitimacy (Vasstrøm and Normann, 2014). The unique value of action research lies in accomplishing this dual research engagement: It is between the collaborative efforts and critical engagement that we can contribute to create qualitatively different knowledge and future orientations.

Action research is a search for opening (sustainable and just) development perspectives and readdress exiting trajectories by co-creating knowledge with multiple actors (Vasstrøm, 2016). Action research engagement can contribute to innovative and imaginary development and “planning the undefined becoming” (Boelens and de Roo, 2016). From the facilitative role perspective, action research can generate collaborative spaces and bridge social actors in new networks, that overtime can improve social capital and local (urban) development capacity. From the critical role perspective, the researcher should also consider whose voice is not heard, what issues are not discussed, what are the alternative voices and perspectives that could be involved. Critical questions might create tensions with the already involved stakeholders and with existing purposes and goals. However, it is in such critical —and collaborative— reflections that action research contributes to improved democratic justice and advanced knowledge creation. In the long run such doings can also generate improved policy legitimacy.

As such, action research —in its facilitative role— can over time become a methodology for longer term policy (and organizational) learning (Vasstrøm and Normann, 2014). From the critical role, this also requires an ability to iteratively reflect and reframe current under-

standings in relation to issues of sustainability and justice. Such facilitative —and critical engagement is, in my view, key for developing legitimate and ethically sound social research in societal development projects and policy making.

I finalize my reflection by arguing that in an increasing global, complex and conflictual world, action research has important roles to play (Hansen *et al.* 2016). Future societal development – urban, as well as rural, need to consider issues of sustainability, democracy, as well as justice, to ensure societal legitimacy and resilience. Following points made by Haarstad *et al.* (2018), I argue that critical action research can potentially fulfill several roles in future transitions : I) coordinate and facilitate knowledge co-creation with actors at all levels (from citizens to politicians, business and public administration) in order to *produce and situate actionable knowledge*; II) develop and facilitate reflexive spaces between a variety of actors to *challenge and reframe discourses and visions*, and III) create spaces and processes to bridge and connect actors across horizontal and vertical scales/levels to *generate innovation, collective visions and collaborative efforts*.

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## Experiential Post 8.2

# La investigación-acción: reflexiones y exploración desde un lugar metodológicamente distinto

Eduardo Sisti<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*Action research: reflections and exploration from a methodologically different place*

The context of the "Bilbao Next Lab" project serves as a framework to reflect on the following question: what lessons can be learned from this action research process from the perspective of someone who also works in other types of research projects and with other methods? I underline three features. First, action researchers must have human and professional facilitative capacities, together with capacities to propose the theoretical bases of discussion. Second, results in this type of initiatives will depend on the degree of trust and awareness generated. Therefore, there are long-term outcomes based on collective intangibles which serve as a platform to address new shared problems. Third, it is essential for a researcher to increase her analytical "toolbox" and to "transit" methodological bridges which will improve the research outcomes.

### Laburpena

*Ikerketa ekintza: metodologiari dagokionez desberdina den nonbaitetik eginiko hausnarketak eta esplorazioa*

«Bilbao Next Lab» proiektuaren testuinguruak ondorengo galderari buruz hausnartzeko markoa sortu du: zein ikasketa atera ditzakegu ikerketa ekintza prozesu honetatik ikerketa beste proiektu mota batzuetan eta bestelako metodoekin egiten duen norbaitek ikuspegitik? Hiru elementu azpimarratu ditut. Lehenik, ikerketa ekintzan diharduten pertsonen fasilitaziorako gaitasun pertsonalak eta profesionalak garatu behar dituzte, baita eztabaidarako oinarri teorikoak ere. Bigarrenik, era honetako ekimenen emaitzak sortutako konfiantza eta kontzientziaren araberakoak izango dira. Ondorioz, epe luzeko emaitzak izango dira, ukiezin kolektiboetan oinarrituak eta beste partekatutako arazo batzuei ere aurre egiteko plataformak sortuko dituztenak. Hirugarrenik, ezinbestekoa da ikerlari batentzat bere tresneria analitikoza zabaldu eta zubi metodologikoak eraikitzea, horrela ikerketaren emaitzak hobetzeko.

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Autor del post en la presentación de resultados parciales del proceso de investigación acción para el diagnóstico de la Industria 4.0 en pymes de Gipuzkoa.

El contexto del proyecto «Bilbao Next Lab» sirve de marco para la descripción de un proceso de investigación acción para el desarrollo territorial (IADT). La problemática que la iniciativa indaga es la incidencia de la multi-escala, en el cada vez más significativo rol de las ciudades para el desarrollo territorial. En este marco, se reflexiona sobre la siguiente pregunta: ¿Qué lecciones se pueden aprender de este proceso de investigación acción desde la perspectiva de alguien que trabajar también en otro tipo de proyectos y métodos de investigación?

En primer lugar, es significativo remarcar que el análisis de la gobernanza multi-escalar reviste de una gran complejidad. Consecuentemente, los investigadores en la acción abocados a ello deben reunir capacidades profesionales y humanas singulares. En concreto, el trabajo de facilitación de las múltiples interacciones demanda contar con sólidas bases teóricas para proponer y determinar espacios de reflexión que sean fructíferos y equilibrados. En el capítulo, esto se manifiesta en la proposición de una aproximación teórica fundada en cuatro dimensiones: alcance, relaciones de poder, complejidad organizacional, y competitividad de las ciudades. Pero eso solo no basta, el componente humano también es fundamental para generar condiciones para la reflexión y la acción, tales como paciencia (que se refleja en las palabras de Miren sobre «entender la perspectiva de los participantes») y compromiso (que se refleja en sus palabras sobre «la necesidad de una aproximación colaborativa y participativa»).

En segundo lugar, es interesante considerar que los resultados del proceso dependerán del grado de confianza y del nivel de conciencia generado entre los actores. A su vez, y en un mismo plano de significatividad que lo anterior, los procesos de IADT se destacan por ser procesos cuyos resultados maduran en el largo plazo, y que se evidencian en la generación de intangibles colectivos y en la capacidad de servir de plataforma para abordar y resolver otras problemáticas comunes a las partes intervinientes. Por ejemplo, he participado en un proceso de ARTD en el diagnóstico de la situación frente al paradigma de la Industria 4.0 en pymes industriales que fue fruto de un proceso anterior de construcción colectiva de gobernanza.

En tercer lugar, disponiendo de antecedentes académicos y profesionales más enfocados en otro tipo de aproximaciones metodológicas, considero esencial que un investigador esté abierto a explorar y acrecentar su *caja de herramientas* analíticas. Una razón que fun-

damenta dicha proposición es el complejo contexto socioeconómico actual que demanda un abordaje multidisciplinar y la necesidad de transitar puentes metodológicos. En este sentido, Denman y Haro (2000) señalan que «el rigor científico no debe restringirse a la discusión de métodos para la recolección de información, tampoco a la rapidez con que se recogen los datos, sino a la calidad de las decisiones que se efectúan en el proceso de investigación» (citado en Margarito, 2009).

Para concluir, la problemática tratada en el capítulo propone una aproximación conceptual sobre los desafíos propios de un problema de investigación actual como la gobernanza multiescalar en la ciudad de Bilbao. En este marco, se destaca que la IADT es un enfoque apropiado para su abordaje; y además, se señalan las necesidades y los desafíos de capacidades que los *trabajadores intelectuales* deben disponer en el complejo entorno actual.

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## Chapter 9

# Key features of first-person action research for second-person action researchers

Miren Larrea<sup>1</sup>

### Laburpena

*Lehen pertsonan egindako ikerketa-ekintzaren oinarriak ikerketa-ekintza bigarren pertsonan egiten duten ikerlarientzat*

Kapitulu honen helburua ikertzaileoi geure buruaren inguruko gogoeta *lurralde garapenerako ikerketa-ekintzaren* (LGIE) barne sartzea da. Horrela, aurrerantzean ere gure ikerketaren helburua eragileen arazoei irtenbidea ematea izango den arren, eragile horien ongizateari ez ezik, ikertzaileon ongizateari ere jarri nahi diot arreta.

Orain arte, LGIE bigarren pertsonan egindako hurbilketa bat izanik, politikari hautetsien eta administrazio publikoko funtzionarioen eraldaketa prozesuari eman diogu garrantzia. Ikertzaileen eraldaketa prozesuei —hau da, geure eraldaketari— ordea, ia ez diogu arretarik eskaini. Kapitulu honetan, ikerketa-ekintza lehenengo pertsonan erabiltzen dut, neure burua eta —modu sinbolikoan— ekintzara modu kontzientean bideratzen den edozein ikertzailearena, LGIEren eremuan azaleratzeko. Galdera hauxe izan da nire ikerketaren gidari: Zein ezaugarri izan behar ditu geure buruaren inguruko gogoetak eraldatzailea izan dadin?

Neure buruaren inguruko gogoetarekin hasteko gai moduan lurralde garapenerako ikerketa-ekintzako bideratzaile edo fasilatadoreen ikusezintasuna hartu dut (Costamagna eta Larrea, 2018). Bideratzaileak ikusezin bihurtzen dira lurraldeko eragileek, lurralde garapenerako ikerketa-ekintzari esker ahalduz diren horiek, prozesua beretzat hartzen dutenean, bideratzaileei (ikertzaileak gehienetan) prozesuaz jabetzea zailtzen dien modu batean.

Kapitulu hau idazteko Hilary Bradburyren laguntza izan dut eta bera izan da kapitulu honen oinarrian dagoen gogoeta prozesuaren bideratzailea. Hilaryren argibideei jarraituz, neure gogoeta genero ikuspegian oinarritu dut, niretzat ikuspegi hori berria bada ere. Lurralde Garapenerako Laborategian —Gipuzkoako Foru Aldundiak 2009az geroztik bultzatzen duen ekimenean— izan dudana ibilbidea hartu dut oinarri. Hasierako esplorazioak lagundu zidan konturatzen espazio honetan lurraldeko eragile moduan parte hartu dutenak gizonak izan direla eta bideratzaile lanetan aritu garen tokiko ikertzaileak, berriz, emakumeak. Literaturak lagundu dit gizon eta emakumeen arteko bereizketa hori gainditzen eta lurralde garapenerako ikerketa-ekintzaren barruan, maskulinoak eta femeninoak diren

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<sup>1</sup> Orkestra- Basque Institute of Competitiveness, University of Deusto.

rolak definitzen. Premisa horietatik abiatuta, neure gogoeta prozesuak lagundu dit lurralde garapenerako ikerketa-ekintzan bideratze lana femeninoa dela eta, agian, horrexegatik ikusezin bihurtzen dela ulertzen.

Hortik abiatuta eta gure ikerketa prozesuetan bideratzaileen lana ikusezina izan ez dadin, lan hau egiteko modu berriak bilatu beharra azaleratzen dut. Horretarako estrategietako bat, hain zuzen, lehen pertsonan egindako ikerketa ekintza bultzatzea da eta beronek izan beharreko ezaugarriak bost ardatzen inguruan jasotzen ditut: eraldaketa, ahalduntzea, fasilitazioa, dimentsio politikoa, eta gorputza eta buruaren arteko integrazioa.

## Resumen

### *Elementos clave de la investigación acción en primera persona para investigadores que desarrollan la investigación acción en segunda persona*

El objetivo de este capítulo es integrar la auto-reflexión de los investigadores como parte de la *investigación acción para el desarrollo territorial* (IADT). De esta manera persigo el bienestar, no sólo de los actores cuyos problemas la investigación pretende resolver, sino también de los investigadores.

La IADT se ha desarrollado hasta el momento como una aproximación en segunda persona y se ha centrado en los procesos de transformación de políticos electos y funcionarios de la administración pública. Hemos puesto poca atención en los procesos de transformación de los investigadores, es decir, en nuestros procesos de transformación. En este capítulo utilizo la investigación acción en primera persona como una manera de incluirme a mí misma y —simbólicamente— cualquier investigador en la acción que tome conciencia de sí mismo, en el marco de la IADT. La pregunta de investigación que me ha guiado es: ¿Cuáles son las características principales de la auto-reflexión que la hacen transformadora dentro de la IADT?

El foco de mi investigación es la invisibilidad de las personas facilitadoras en la IADT (Costamagna y Larrea, 2018). La invisibilidad se produce cuando los actores territoriales, empoderados a través de la IADT, se apropian del proceso de una manera que genera dificultades para las personas facilitadoras, frecuentemente investigadores, para apropiarse también.

Hilary Bradbury, co-investigadora en este proceso y autora del capítulo corto correspondiente, ha facilitado el proceso de auto-reflexión en que se fundamenta este capítulo. Siguiendo las indicaciones de Hilary, he realizado mi proceso de auto-reflexión desde la perspectiva de género, que ha sido nueva para mí. La experiencia en que me he basado es mi trayectoria en el Laboratorio de Desarrollo Territorial, impulsado a partir de 2009 por la Diputación Foral de Gipuzkoa. Mi exploración preliminar me ayudó a tomar conciencia de que en este espacio los actores territoriales que han participado como stakeholders son hombres y las investigadoras locales que han jugado un rol de facilitación, mujeres. La literatura me ha ayudado a superar esta distinción entre hombres y mujeres para pasar a definir dentro de la IADT roles masculinos y femeninos.

Partiendo de las anteriores premisas, mi proceso de auto-reflexión me ayuda a explicitar la necesidad de buscar para la IADT nuevos modos de trabajo que eviten invisibilizar la facilitación, y, por lo tanto, lo femenino. Una de las estrategias para visibilizar lo femenino es precisamente integrar en la IADT la investigación acción en primera persona articulada en torno a cinco elementos: la transformación, el empoderamiento, la facilitación, la dimensión política y la integración del cuerpo y la mente.

## Key features of first-person action research for second-person action researchers

Amari, ahizpari  
eta alabei, burruka hortan iraungo duten zuhaitz-ardaska gazteei.  
*Xabier Leteren hitzetan oinarritua.*

To my mother, my sister  
and to my daughters, the young tree branches that will endure in that struggle.  
*Based on lyrics by Xabier Lete.*

### Introduction

Every chapter in this book further develops Action Research for Territorial Development (ARTD). The goal in this one is to integrate self-inquiry framed in first-person action research as part of ARTD and thus pursue the wellbeing not only of stakeholders but also of action researchers as an aim of action research (AR).

ARTD has evolved as a second-person AR approach inspired by Greenwood & Levin (2007) and their distinction between stakeholders, who are insiders/problem owners, and action researchers, who are outsiders. We revisited this conceptual distinction by defining both stakeholders and action researchers as territorial actors (Karlsen & Larrea, 2014; Costamagna & Larrea, 2018). However, in practice, ARTD focuses mainly on the transformation of policy-makers and little attention is paid to the transformation of action researchers. In this chapter, I use first-person AR as a way to include myself and —symbolically— any self-aware action researcher within the theatre of ARTD.

The focal inquiry I take as a starting point is the invisibility of facilitation in ARTD processes (Costamagna & Larrea, 2018) when stakeholders make the AR process their own, while action researchers facilitating the process have difficulties in doing so. Hilary Bradbury, my co-inquirer in this chapter and author of the corresponding mini chapter, has helped facilitate the self-inquiry process which is the basis for this writing.

The research question that guided this reflection and writing process is: what appear to be the key features of self-inquiry that can make it transformative within ARTD? My own experience of self-inquiry regarding the invisibility of facilitators is therefore used to develop the final discussion in this chapter, where I specifically reflect on this question.

The chapter starts with a conceptual section which grapples with first-person action research and contextualises it with insights from previous first-person experiences in ARTD. I then pose the dilemma of invisibility of facilitators, which is the starting point for my self-inquiry process. In the following section, I share the results of the self-inquiry process, where I discovered that a gender perspective helps revitalise the challenge of overcoming the invisibility of facilitators. The chapter closes with a final discussion based on my findings in this process, where I discuss the usefulness of first-person AR for second-person action researchers.

### First-person action research

There is no unique definition of first-person action research. Reason and Bradbury (2001, p. v-vi) follow Torbert's constructivist adult development approach to "territories of experi-

ence”, in which first-person AR is a necessary “skill and method” that develops the ability of the researcher to foster an inquiring approach to his or her own life, to act with awareness, and to assess effects in the outside world while acting. Marshall (1999, p. 156-7) defines it as a range of “beliefs, strategies and ways of behaving” which encourage the researcher to treat little as fixed, finished, or clear-cut. First-person means that rather than observing ourselves as objects from the outside, we “experience ourselves as subjects with direct awareness of how we act and learn” (Coghlan, 2008, p. 352). In first-person practice, therefore, we are noticing how we think, process data, come to understand, form judgements, make decisions and take action (Coghlan, 2013).

First-person AR is defined against the background of second and third-person AR, which is a distinction originally developed by Torbert (2001). Second-person AR refers to action research undertaken in small groups, in which the participants are both actors and researchers, involved in an inquiry into issues of mutual concern. Third-person AR includes large groups of people who are part of the same community of inquiry but do not actually meet face to face (Torbert, 2001; Chandler & Torbert, 2003; Adams, 2014). Bradbury and Reason (2001, p. 449) synthesise these three approaches, referring to them as “work for oneself”, “work for partners” and “work for people in the wider context”, and exhort action researchers to integrate these types more.

There remains an argument when referring to first, second and third-person action research that these approaches should be seen as interconnected, with first-person inquiry providing a foundation for second and third-person action research (Torbert, 2001). This chapter aims at building this connection in ARTD.

### **First-person action research in ARTD**

There are different paths that lead to connecting first and second-person action research. Burgess (2006) writes about the expectation that novice researchers will start with self-discovery in order to locate themselves in their inquiry. However, if we observe action researchers in the ARTD environment, Romano (2018) is the only one who entered AR through self-inquiry. The rest of us had been involved in second-person AR for some years before even thinking about first-person approaches.

In addition to discovering first-person action research late, I had a stumbling entrance into it. I received comments from reviewers of our/my papers that nudged me, albeit with different tones of encouragement:

[There] is an important ongoing debate [on] whether “first-person AR” really can or cannot be categorised as research

There is a lot of autoethnography and other first-person work that is narcissistic, trivial, and to me, quite irritating. [...] the authors need to explain how the AR approach gets past narcissism and moves into adding necessary dimensions to competent practice [...].

I concur here with one of the peer reviewers in not quite understanding the constraint you put on yourself about first-person (vs second-person) action research. The entire project feels very second-person AR, even third-person.

Clearly, the integration of first-person AR into ARTD needed to address these questions, and in doing so, I crafted an argument in favour of such integration. First-person AR is a good strategy for us (action researchers) to take on our own change process as part of territorial development. After all, in our previous experience of ARTD, territorial actors did not change because we told them to, nor exclusively because we helped them reflect on how to



change. They changed because we transformed ourselves and because we interacted with them in ways that were new to all of us. I consider that the only way to keep territorial development going is to continue transforming ourselves and unless we integrate first-person AR into ARTD, we will have limited capabilities to do so. If we tackle this issue properly, first-person inquiry could be at the core of the transformational capacity of ARTD, and far from being perceived as a constraint or as narcissistic, trivial and irritating storytelling, it could become a key developmental requirement.

### **The invisibility of facilitation: the dilemma at the core of self-inquiry**

Self-inquiry starts from a puzzle or dilemma. Invisibility was first referred to as a dilemma in ARTD by Costamagna & Larrea (2018). Territorial actors are those who reflect, decide and act on territorial development. Facilitators are those who, on an individual basis or as part of a team of facilitators, take on the role of creating the conditions that enable actors to reflect, decide and act. They do so in a context of mutual learning, as there is nothing like previous knowledge for making people behave in the “right” way. Both action researchers and stakeholders can play roles as territorial actors and facilitators, and often play both roles simultaneously. In these cases, we speak of facilitative researchers and facilitative stakeholders (usually policymakers). Yet, in the experience of ARTD, stakeholders primarily play territorial actor roles while action researchers take on facilitative roles.

The dilemma is posed after observing our processes and seeing a recurrent pattern. In the initial stages of facing a problem, when actors lacked facilitative capabilities, action researchers had a strong voice when sharing process knowledge in the dialogue among different actors. When the actors internalised the rationale of the process, some decided to lead the process on their own. And indeed this was, following our ARTD principles, a positive achievement for the AR process that signalled that it was a good time for the action researchers to step back. However, probably because the process was deeply rooted in the collaboration between action researchers and policymakers, stakeholders invited action researchers to stay, but with a reformulated role for the next cycle. The policymakers that had had the closest interaction with researchers felt prepared to take formal responsibility to facilitate their own deepening process, although this time, they were supported by action researchers in private. The latter, in order not to “compete” with the actors, accepted that they would not have a public voice in these governance spaces and so stepped into the background. This led them to experience public invisibility.

#### ***My experience of the dilemma of invisibility***

The phenomenon of feeling invisible was most prevalent in my experience in the Territorial Development Laboratory (TDLab), an action research process ongoing since 2009, where I played the role of research director between 2010 and 2019. One of our main goals in the laboratory was supporting the construction of participatory governance for territorial development in the province of Gipuzkoa, in the Basque Country (Spain), which has 720,000 inhabitants. During the period of 2013-2017, we used AR to construct the spaces and procedures of this governance. The main actors in this governance were the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa and eleven county development agencies. In 2015, the decision was made to formalise the new spaces and procedures through a signed agreement between them. Action researchers had a relevant role in the learning and negotiation processes that led to the signing of this agreement.

We facilitated this process by having our own voice in the workshops and meetings. I even wrote the first draft for the agreement, where I introduced action research as part of the participative learning procedures of the new governance. However, policymakers decided that AR would not be mentioned in the agreement, as research and researchers were not formally recognised as a structural part of governance. This made action research and researchers invisible in the main document that described the procedures of the new governance. Moreover, after the agreement was signed, the role of action researchers was redefined in the intercounty table, the main space of the collaborative governance: we would be present but not explicitly facilitate the process, which meant we would be witnesses, but not participants in the dialogue. We, action researchers, agreed with policymakers from the provincial council that they would thereafter facilitate the process in this space, and we would help them prepare for that. We would facilitate the facilitators.

At first, this change did not seem to be problematic. I felt that asking for my own voice in the process would be selfish. My cognitive interpretation was that as a facilitator my role was simply to help the actors that hired us and if they felt we could do that better by working with them in private, while we remained silent in the collaborative governance spaces, then that was the way to proceed. Still, I felt uncomfortable and I conceptualised this discomfort as part of a conflict between policymakers and researchers (Larrea, 2019). In fact, the discrepancy between my rational sense-making and my emotional experience of discomfort slowly drove me into a deeper inquiry. And in this inquiry, I became more aware of a process of feeling emotionally drained and ready to detach from the TDLab. However, the TDLab was very important to the team and to me, and this detachment did not feel productive. Indeed, this is the puzzle at the core of why I have inquired more deeply into the first-person process as a way to better understand my second-person AR.

### *The discussion on invisibility in the ARTD community*

I shared this dilemma with colleagues from different countries in an experimental interactive platform where we discussed facilitation. Here are two quotes that represent the two main positions that emerged:

I think that the facilitative role is not valued in territorial development processes because often we, the facilitators, have thought that it was important to remain invisible in that role. Today I think the opposite is true.

I have doubts about when a facilitator should be visible because there must be a balance regarding the centrality and/or leadership of actors.

I came to share my new thoughts about it more directly:

I see two positions in the discussion. One relates visibility to centrality and considers that it is risky for a facilitator to be too visible because it prevents actors from being the protagonists. I identify myself more with another perspective, [...] visibility of facilitators and actors are not mutually excluding.

In my new sense-making, I reformulated visibility as a requirement of my work and distinguished it from being a protagonist. In the next section, I share my new interpretation of the dilemma constructed through a self-inquiry process facilitated by Hilary Bradbury.

## Gender as the thread to revisit facilitation

### *Initial awareness through partnership coaching*

The self-inquiry process materialised as four inquiry-meetings we called “partnership coaching”. These regular meetings, with some reflective work in between, were built on work already underway and were set in a larger context of seeking to accomplish more together, given our different approaches and geographical settings. In our preliminary informal conversations, I realised that when reflecting on what I was sharing about ARTD, Hilary mentioned gender issues. Feminism as part of my action research was a new perspective to me, and because I did not immediately consider it especially significant to the inquiry process unfolding, I questioned its relevance. However, after two or three conversations in which gender continued to pop up, I decided to explore it further.

My first step was to revisit the Territorial Development Laboratory (TDLab), this time consciously looking through a gender lens. AR has been part of the laboratory since its inception in 2009 when we were two women undertaking facilitation in the day-to-day interaction with policymakers. Today this team is composed of eight members, five of whom directly facilitate the policymakers’ processes. All five are women. Since 2009, the leading stakeholders in the AR processes with the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa have been thirteen policymakers from the general deputy’s cabinet and economic development department. All of them are men. I could summarise all this by stating that the TDLab is an environment where ARTD has taken place as a dialogical process between male policymakers and female facilitative action researchers. I realised that maybe gender did have a role to play after all.

This situation resonated with something I had read about facilitation: “women in particular are attracted to the art of facilitation” (Groot, 2002, p. i). This meant that, although there were facilitative men in our territorial development processes, women were more prone to becoming invisible. Numbers in the TDLab supported Groot’s assertion, but I remembered two male colleagues complaining when I had shared this idea. I was worried that I was being unfair to facilitative men. However, all things considered, the situation unveiled through self-inquiry was so poignantly unfair to women that I needed to express it to be true to myself.

### *Approaching gender literature*

Some aspects of participatory action research have been described as androcentric (Maguire, 1987) since early AR traditions have been associated with men (Anderson, Herr and Nihlen, 1994; Brydon-Miller, Maguire & McIntyre, 2004).

In this context, my next step in the self-inquiry process was to look into the gender literature where I read about the commonly accepted stereotypes of women’s thinking as emotional, intuitive and personalised. These stereotypes are said to devalue women’s minds and contributions, particularly in western technologically oriented cultures, which value rationalism and objectivity. We have been educated to assume that “intuitive knowledge is more primitive, therefore less valuable, than so-called objective modes of knowing” (Sampson 1978, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986, p. 6).

Furthermore, women have been described as operating within a morality of responsibility and care more often than men do (Belenky *et al.*, 1986). The feminine personality is presumed to define itself in relation and connection to other people more than the masculine personality does, something that is seen as a deficit and not as something positive. Additionally, girls experience the needs or feelings of another as their own more often than boys

do (Chodorow, 1974; Gilligan, 1982), and again this value is not celebrated in a context in which rationality and distance are considered to be important.

Belenky *et al.* (1986) say that when masculine values prevail, which happens quite often in institutional and social life, women, lacking role models, question the normality of their feelings and alter their judgments in deference to the conventional male-coded opinions of others, be they male or female. In a situation where masculine frameworks are therefore taken for granted, the argument that the “masculine and feminine views of morality are complementary (rather than sequential or opposed)” is difficult to understand (Belenky *et al.*, 1986, p. 6-7).

Through these readings, I grew aware that I could easily connect the feminine with facilitation in ARTD and the masculine with the role of territorial actors participating as stakeholders. This could not be simplified into connecting women exclusively to facilitation and men exclusively to actor’s roles. I was aware that I had worked with men who were facilitators and women who were actors in ARTD. However, the numbers in our project supported the idea that, generally, women enacted the feminine role and, generally, men enacted the masculine one.

It was the contribution by Fletcher (2001, p. ix) that provided the framework to articulate the need to transform our interpretation of facilitation in ARTD. In the first paragraph of her preface, she states: “this is a book about relational work and the disappearing acts that render it invisible in today’s workplace. It is written for the many people who find that the off-line, backstage, or collaborative work they do, and the relational skills this kind of work requires, are not recognised or rewarded at work”. There I had invisibility described as social phenomena, and I felt I was one of the “many people” she had written the book for. Fletcher also argues that “that is only part of the story because, at its heart, this is a book about why this kind of work [...] is “women’s work” and why that makes the story of this disappearance so much more interesting”. Her words encourage me to leave my comfort zone and argue that what I have experienced and described as invisibility is probably part of the experience of many other women.

Fletcher (2001) defines the feminine as a belief system about how growth and effectiveness occur. In this belief system, growth does not happen through a process of separation and individuation, but in mutuality and connection. This model of growth does not presume to speak for all women, but there are strong forces operating to encourage women to enact it. The connection with the dilemma posed in this chapter emerged with her argument that because of these forces, women are shouldered with the responsibility of creating relational conditions for growth *invisibly*, without acknowledging either the support or the need for it. This allows the belief in independence and individual achievement to go unchallenged. Additionally, it creates a double workload for women leaders, tasked with conventional male performance, and also with the expectation that they perform relational work, without it being acknowledged. My dilemma of invisibility had now transformed itself into the awareness that I needed to help facilitators in ARTD, among other things, to release themselves from the double workload of responding to both conventional and relational work.

## **Rethinking facilitation in ARTD**

The inquiry meetings with Hilary, and the readings in between, helped me revisit my perspective on the dilemma of invisibility in ARTD. Facilitation in ARTD is related to interdependence, nurturance and contextual thought, the principles most enacted and honoured by women. Actors, on the other hand, are defined by the power they have to make decisions and act. They do so in a context where their decisions, actions and enactments are visible.

I gained awareness that in our taken for granted masculine interpretation of territorial development, we had accepted that the visibility of facilitators meant a threat to actors who, also from a masculine interpretation of territorial development, might have seen us as competitors and not allies in the cooperative processes.

My emotional response became clearest to me when confronted with a thought that made me feel especially restless: our definition of facilitation in a highly feminine tone might reinforce the idea that action researchers in ARTD “should devote themselves to the care and empowerment of others while remaining ‘self-less’” (Belenky *et al.*, 1986, p. 46). Care and empowerment are, in my frameworks, positive features, but remaining self-less requires imbalance, which is a disturbing thought. By defining facilitation as subordinated to action, we had subordinated the feminine to the masculine and, given the statistics in our project, women to men. I felt the urge to reformulate this.

Paying attention to my own emotional response also helped me realise that, by defining action researchers as facilitative actors and not exclusively as facilitators, I was trying to gain visibility. I was doing this by enhancing my masculine dimension, my role as an actor. This role was mainly enacted through academic writing, where I could decide, act and be visible. I realised that in the last few years, I had felt the need to write and publish on my own, something I had never done since I finished my PhD two decades ago. I interpreted this as a process of growing through individuation. I realised I also had (and enjoyed) this masculine dimension. However, I felt that by enacting my masculine dimension in order to be visible, while keeping facilitation invisible, was a kind of betrayal to my principles. I thus claim that visibility of facilitators and actors does not need to be mutually excluding and that the feminine must be made visible in ARTD.

I argue that the visibility of facilitation is an effective strategy for territories which, in the face of the current societal challenges, require explicit feminine strategies and capabilities. We need to overcome the false separation between masculine/public/achievement activities and feminine/private/support activities (Fletcher, 2001) towards a framework that is balanced, reflective, inclusive of the exiled feminine qualities that give our work its heart and its success (Bradbury, 2015).

In the relationship between men and women in professional environments, men generally come invested with more unilateral status and power than women, and it is to their advantage not to draw attention to power issues, while women’s exercise of power may initially be concentrated in the mode of critique (Bradbury & Torbert, 2016). This chapter is my way of drawing attention to power issues in ARTD.

## **Conclusion: first-person action research for second-person action researchers**

I conclude this chapter by returning to the research question: what appear to be the key features of self-inquiry that can make it transformative within ARTD? At the time of writing these conclusions, I have left the TDLab and I am part of a new ARTD process. In one of the initial meetings, I shared with policymakers my thoughts that facilitation, and thus ARTD, had been rendered invisible in the TDLab and I would like to work on its visibility in the new project. The answer from one of the policymakers was that ARTD would be visible, though we had to negotiate how. By integrating my claim for visibility as part of my facilitation, self-inquiry was transformative for me. In the next paragraphs, I share what I think were the features that made it so.

Inspired by Coghlan (2008), I define *self-inquiry in ARTD* as a first-person AR process conducted by second-person action researchers in order to experience themselves as subjects in second-person AR processes with direct awareness of how they act and learn. I propose

five features that can be regarded as discrete building blocks of self-inquiry in ARTD which overlap with the new articulation of Action-oriented Research for Transformations, ART as expressed by Bradbury *et al.* (2019):

a) ***Action in self-inquiry in ARTD is the transformation of the researcher in the context of second-person AR processes***

There is no action research without action. However, there are multiple interpretations of what action is. My reflections on gender, the invisibility of the exiled feminine, along with my own role in AR processes, have been directly funnelled into our ARTD dialogue with policymakers. The result has been an explicit claim on my part to keep facilitation visible and to own its impact. And this change in my behaviour is a new action which comes from reflecting on the difficulty of feeling invisible.

It is through this transformation process —reflection on action, making difficult things discussable— that we generate the conditions for policymakers and policy to also transform. By us creating space for such inquiry, there is space for our partners to engage more deeply in more transformative ways. Hopefully, the claim to make facilitation visible will initiate a process to co-generate policies that are innovative in their treatment of gender and do not lead to “disappearing acts” of the feminine. The action expected after self-inquiry in ARTD is thus the transformation of how action researchers interact with stakeholders in second-person AR processes.

b) ***Self-inquiry empowers researchers and problematises power in second-person ARTD***

The inclusion of self-inquiry as a feature of ARTD changes the process from being exclusively focused on the transformation process of stakeholders to also focusing on the action researchers’ own personal transformation. Action researchers are empowered in the process, which affects the interpretation of power between action researchers and stakeholders.

In my case, I spoke to Hilary about how self-inquiry was changing me and how I was experimenting with discussing issues of power with one of the policymakers in our second-person AR processes:

I shared with him that I’m also strong in a way and I’m trying to help him see where that strength is, so that the relationship we design now —if we decide to work together— is more balanced.

Hilary pushed me to go deeper into this aspect:

[You are] conceiving power at a later developmental stage in which power is more mutual. What does that mutuality mean for you? You talk about it, you write about it, but what does it really, really mean? You might have to look inside yourself.

My insights about power, gender and informing the next stage of ARTD grew out of the very processes I am reflecting on, which were made possible by seeking a partner to facilitate my own inquiry.

### c) *Self-inquiry in ARTD benefits from co-inquiry with a facilitator*

Co-inquiry is one, but not the only approach proposed for self-inquiry in first-person AR (Marshall, 2016). Considering that quite often it is experienced second-person AR facilitators who conduct ARTD, we might feel tempted to try to facilitate our own inquiry processes.

My insight is that facilitation of our own self-inquiry process is radically different from facilitation of second-person AR, because in self-reflection we have to “experience ourselves as subjects” (Coghlan, 2008, p. 352), which second-person AR cannot train us to do. Facilitating our own self-reflection means that the facilitator and the facilitated have the same taken-for-granted assumptions, and thus, the same blind spots. This makes it extremely difficult to become aware of unaddressed dimensions. For instance, I would probably not have embraced the reflection on gender unless Hilary had helped me see that dimension in my experience.

In addition, paying attention to stakeholders is so ingrained in the habits of second-person action researchers that it is difficult to keep attention focused on ourselves. Again, I think that Hilary’s guidance was important to set the focus on me. I share an example of how she recurrently brought me back into self-inquiry:

But I’m saying something slightly different. I’m saying: rather than focusing on him [the stakeholder in AR], focus on you. [...] Maybe you’re too focused externally. What do you see if you bring the focus back to the intelligence of you, your intuitions, your behaviours, your intentions?

### d) *Facilitation of self-inquiry in ARTD is political*

There is no neutral facilitation, and facilitators influence self-inquiry in directions that coincide with their values and principles. This needs a pre-inquiry stage where the facilitator and the self-inquirer can connect and learn to what extent their values and principles influence the facilitation process.

Before we agreed on working together in this chapter, Hilary invited me to read *Eros/Power: Love in the Spirit of Inquiry*, the book she had written with Bill Torbert. For me, it was like a declaration of Hilary’s principles and values on self-inquiry. It created favourable conditions for the later co-inquiry process.

Another relevant moment when I understood the political dimension of the process was my decision to openly address gender for the first time in my action research experience. Hilary introduced the issue: “My sense is that [there are] issues of female identity. [...] you’re bringing a relational orientation mind. But that orientation —of women’s leadership— is suspect. It’s not often validated. Right?”

And I accepted the challenge: “I sense the risk, but I don’t feel frightened, I see that this reflection can have an impact”.

External facilitation of self-inquiry can thus be interpreted as a subtle process of negotiation and agreement, where the political positions of the facilitator and the self-inquirer speak to each other. This is consistent with the treatment of political views in ARTD (Karlsen and Larrea, 2018).

### e) *Self-inquiry brings the whole body into ARTD*

This is one of the most shocking features I have discovered in first-person AR. ARTD has developed with a very rationalistic approach where, apparently, only our rational

cognition was in the foreground with little interference from the wisdom of our bodies, for example, our emotions, our intuitions. My previous attempts to develop self-inquiry had this rationalistic feature and as a consequence privileged only thinking, talking and writing.

Working with Hilary, I learnt to integrate my body's reactions (wisdom of emotional response) into the process. Reading the transcripts of our conversations in retrospect, I realise how insistent she had to be to take me from my rational mode of thinking into a process that involved mind and body. These are some of her words encouraging me to do so:

I suggest we just sit in silence for a moment because otherwise, your mind's going to jump in there and tell you what to do [having named a specific problem], and it probably won't be very creative.

For homework, don't work your mind around this issue. Just notice your thoughts, which may change, of course, and see which feelings come up from earlier life.

What might be some of the experiments you can do in everyday life? I would like to recommend that one of them includes [...] a little bit of meditation. Like we just did, checking in with "What does my body want me to know?" Do I feel constricted or lighter when I contemplate a new action?

Try drawing your response as a cartoon figure rather than writing it out.

Some of my answers show my struggle with this unfamiliar dimension of self-inquiry: "you said that insight comes when we are not thinking and [...] I realise I think a lot!" and "I feel what you are saying makes sense, but I'm not sure I know how to do it".

These five features of self-inquiry in ARTD are our first attempt to introduce first-person AR as one more dimension of ARTD. I hope they resonate with other second-person action researchers who consider that self-inquiry can help them improve how they work with stakeholders.

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## Short Chapter 9

# Facilitating wholeness: Facilitating partnership coaching

Hilary Bradbury<sup>1</sup>

### Résumé

#### *Faciliter la globalité: Faciliter le coaching en partenariat*

Le travail de Miren avec des politiques m'inspire. Dans ce chapitre, ma réflexion se fait du point de vue d'un observateur participant du travail de Miren. Nous nous sommes rencontrés pour la première fois, sur un mode incorporel, dans une relation d'Éditeur en Chef (moi) lisant le travail d'une auteure (Miren) après qu'un des éditeurs associés a annoncé que son travail était «prêt pour publication». Lors de réunions postérieures online puis de réunions en face à face, nous avons appris à nous connaître plus en profondeur. Lisant le chapitre de Miren, je vois deux sujets sur lesquels il me semble intéressant de s'arrêter. Je considère: qu'est-ce que j'admire exactement? de quels éléments est composée la sensibilité politique qu'a Miren? quelles sont les implications de cette sensibilité pour d'autres chercheurs qui sont également engagés dans la transformation en temps de crise socio-écologique?

### Resumen

#### *Facilitando el todo: facilitando el coaching entre compañeros*

El trabajo de Miren con políticos me inspira. En este capítulo reflexiono desde la perspectiva de un observador participante del trabajo de Miren. Nos encontramos por primera vez en el modo incorpóreo de un Editor Jefe (yo) que leía el trabajo de una autora (Miren) después de que uno de los editores asociados anunciara que su trabajo estaba «listo para publicación». En reuniones posteriores online y después en persona hemos llegado a conocernos más en profundidad. Al leer el capítulo de Miren destaco dos temas sobre los que encuentro interesante detenerse. Considero, ¿qué es exactamente lo que admiro? ¿cuáles son los elementos de esa sensibilidad política que Miren tiene? ¿cuáles son las implicaciones de esta sensibilidad para otros investigadores en la acción que están también comprometidos con la transformación en tiempos de crisis socio-ecológica?

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<sup>1</sup> Foundation AR+.

## Facilitating wholeness: Facilitating partnership coaching

### Theme 1. *Leadership is wholeness, embodying feminine and masculine values*

I appreciate in Miren her ability to balance the roles of facilitator and protagonist. This balance may not (and likely is not) available to all. It is certainly not available at the start of a career. It takes work. I see it as a consciously cultivated balance for which Miren has had few professional role models. It is a balance that is less available to women than to men. After all, society expects and reinforces more of the service aspects of facilitation. Men are allowed much more expression as (heroic) protagonists. However, facilitation, especially when imbalanced, is self-diminishing of women's agency. Miren has been unusually conscious about finding the right balance. And so, we might say that Miren's embodiment of this balance suggests a developmental shift from earlier socialization. As we follow her development, we are learning to update our own notions of leadership.

We see that Miren's new balance between facilitator and protagonist comes after harvesting the good from over two decades in her role of "political facilitator". She can celebrate that her team has been successfully selected, and funded, to play a role that is rather rare. Miren works closely and comfortably with elected politicians. This type of work requires a range of skills, skills that Miren had at entry and has consciously developed more deeply since. The basic requirements appear to be access to relational sensitivity and capacity for bold collaboration. The Miren we meet in this chapter is one no longer working with a black-and-white sense of unilateral versus collaborative leadership. She is neither confronting nor avoiding conflict. These binaries – which never go away, are instead treated with nuance. Right timing becomes key, allowing for timely interweaving of what might otherwise be two unintended extremes. Thus, arises a leader who combines facilitator/feminine and protagonist/masculine as a "Facilitative Protagonist", an alchemical term.

In the language of leadership —we may say that Miren is a "transforming leader," the markers of which— as articulated in the work of constructivist adult development (Bradbury and Torbert, 2016) are:

- Process oriented as well as goal oriented.
- Creative at timely intervention and conflict resolution.
- Attuned to implementing a distinctive vision, not just following Achiever-like habits and customs of organizing.

From a learning point of view a transforming leader offers and seeks both single-loop or goal-oriented feedback *and* double-loop, strategy-questioning feedback. We see that Miren is aware of paradox and contradiction. She puts a high value on individuality and responsibility, and on action "sculpted" to particular historical moments. She enjoys playing a variety of roles; engaging in creative, existential acts. And she is aware of the dark side of power, and is tempted by this, channeling it into ethical collaborations.

I highlight this theme at a time when I'm simultaneously worrying about a general societal fall back to authoritarian male leaders. An imagined future in which women and men find creative partnership in leadership seems all the more difficult to actually achieve, except perhaps outside the thriving Nordic region. The umpteen objective facts on the correlation of women's leadership with better outcomes at social, political, familial and inter-personal levels (Eisler and Fry, 2019) appear somehow besides the point.

We have all been socialized in patriarchy. We have all been taught to look down on womanly values —and their contributions— in the professional realm. Choosing to reembody the feminine or caring ethic requires strength. Ironically this embodiment — which is an integration toward wholeness— secures increased capacity as a leader *with* others. This is key for all action researchers. And therefore, it's quite relevant for action researchers committed to transformation on a collective path to a more sustainable world.

In the end the balance that Miren models is far less about biology and more about the value of combining feminine and masculine orientations. In the future, may more of us may integrate an ethics of caring and facilitation, along with bold protagonist moves. This would be an embodiment of integrative leadership.

## Theme 2. *The value of facilitating creative practice in partnership coaching*

As an honored facilitator —more participant than observer— in Miren's process, I feel called to comment also on the importance of introducing the power of the "more than rational" as a path to more creativity in her work. To be clear, this is not about ignoring facts or rational perspectives, instead it is about paying attention to intuition, and the artistic practices of accessing our own creativity. Others more junior in their career might wonder, what strange stuff. But with Miren it appears to have been timely. In our conversations, for a time, I played the conscious role of facilitator, seeking to engage in creative methods to enhance reflexivity. For the record it required only a slight invitation. Perhaps this is so because the voice of external authority (societal and organizational rules) has already become deeply familiar to a successful professional such as Miren. Achievement opens up a space to wonder, what lies *beyond* the familiar ways of working. To be clear, not everyone, indeed far too few of us, ask this question. But when that question is asked it is an important moment in which we get to turn the camera around. On oneself. Practices included making time for taking a vision walk; using color for drawing rather than writing reflections; seated meditation. These are simple practices that more directly invite dialogue between heart and insight, bypassing the tendency to ruminate.

What Miren calls "my facilitation," I call "partnership coaching." It's a partnership, because we overlap with so many inquiries, even if the details of how we live with them differ. Oh, and Miren is so quick with new creative practices! What a pleasure it is to work together. And why not. May our work also be play.

My sincere wish is that more of us could enter into relationships of facilitative partnership coaching with one each other. At the heart of these practices lie curiosity and empathy expressed in active listening. Simple but not easy. To actively listen means to bracket one's own ruminations. The potential upside is immense. I intend with Miren, as with any steward in the AR+ Foundation I lead, to help connect up participative action researchers for transformation around the globe. How does Miren's work inform an entirely different set of circumstances? Without partnership enough to understand the dynamics we cannot accomplish so much. Let's see what we might accomplish together. With partnership only our creativity sets the limit.

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## Experiential Post 9.1

# Transforming as a facilitative actor, and the onus of making the unseen more visible

Malida Mooker<sup>1</sup>

### Résumé

*Transformer en tant qu'acteur facilitateur, et le devoir de rendre visible l'invisible*

Je partage quelques réflexions sur mon expérience comme acteur facilitateur dans le territoire de la Colombie-Britannique au Canada. J'ai entrepris une forme de recherche-action à la première personne pour aborder des problèmes complexes y compris le manque de visibilité qui affectaient mon bien-être. Cela a inclu un processus d'auto-enquête, portant sur des questions d'identité —qui je suis, ce que j'ai raison de valoriser et comment les autres me perçoivent— et qui sont étroitement liés aux sujets de race, du sexe, de l'âge, de dynamiques du pouvoir, entre autres. Cette enquête a transformé mes perspectives et mon travail.

### Resumen

*Transformándome como actora facilitadora, y el deber de hacer visible lo que no se ve*

En esta publicación, comparto algunas reflexiones de mi experiencia como actor facilitador en el territorio de Columbia Británica, Canadá. Me involucré en una forma de investigación acción en primera persona para tratar problemas complejos, incluida la falta de visibilidad, que estaban afectando mi bienestar. Esto implicó un proceso de auto-indagación, abordando cuestiones relacionadas con mi identidad (quién era, qué era aquello que tenía razones para valorar y cómo me percibían los demás), que estaba intrínsecamente relacionado con cuestiones de raza, género, edad y dinámicas de poder, entre otros. Esta investigación tuvo un efecto transformador en mis perspectivas y trabajo.

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The image depicts a one-day workshop on the identity of the British Columbia wine territory with industry participants, organized by my colleagues and I in 2018. In this segment of the workshop, I stayed mostly in the background observing. In such situations, I typically voice out two or three questions or comments (if and when appropriate) and wait for the debriefing with my colleagues, where we all share our critical reflections on the session and plan the next steps for the facilitation process.

## **Introduction**

The conceptualization and illustrations that are presented in Miren Larrea's chapter triggered further reflections of my own experience as a facilitative actor. I share some of the reflections, focusing on the process of self-inquiry, and in/visibility of facilitative actors.

### ***The process of self-inquiry***

About three years ago, I started engaging in a self-inquiry process – reflecting on concerns that I realized were affecting my well-being as a facilitative actor. It was a form of first-person action research though I did not recognize it as such, back then.

I think part of the problem was that I seemed to be working in the background, and my contribution was to a large extent invisible. I also felt that there was limited scope to explore and expand on my capabilities, i.e. the various combinations of doings and beings that an individual has real opportunities to achieve (Alkire, 2002) as a postdoctoral fellow, and facilitative actor in the territorial development environment. A deep feeling of dissatisfaction and inadequacy started to settle in. I was not able to express these properly to others, which perhaps contributed to making the situation more problematic. There was also the worry that I might be perceived as narcissistic. To find a way out of this turmoil, I engaged in a process of self-inquiry to reflect and understand my concerns, capabilities, actions, aspirations, emotions, etc. It was crucial for my well-being and to transform the growing negative thoughts and feelings into positive actions that would benefit the work that I was doing in the terri-



tory. Over time, I realized that my concerns were intrinsically associated with the notion of identity – who I was, what I had reason to value, and how others perceived me.

The question of identity is a complex one, not least because it is difficult to disentangle the various elements. Power dynamics, nationality and racial differences were at the forefront of my earlier reflections. However, as a colleague pointed out gender, age, hierarchy, social class, and culture, among others, also play a role. I started to become more conscious of these issues and as a consequence my perspectives as a facilitative actor evolved. For example, we were working on the development of a shared identity in the British Columbia wine territory. A theme that emerged from the winery owners and other stakeholders was “diversity”, which was primarily considered with regards to the product itself, i.e. wine produced (varietals, wine styles), soil conditions and other geographical characteristics. In a workshop with various territorial actors, I introduced a broader notion of diversity that incorporates concerns around representation of gender, race, heritage, among others, and mentioned brief examples of how these were coming into play in wine territories elsewhere. This is an example of how my own transformation has impacted my approach and the collaborative work that I do in the territory.

### *Invisibility and visibility*

I am now more vocal about the concerns mentioned above. Over time, I have observed significant changes in the territorial development environment that I work in, with regards to enhanced opportunities for myself (and other female colleagues) to be more visible as facilitative actors. There is more explicit recognition of the various contributors through written and visual communication.

In many ways, the more I have been able to have significant roles in facilitating workshops and discussions (and not simply work on the processes in the background), the more I, and my work have moved from a less visible to a more visible space. The distinction of “visibility as a requirement of my work [ . . . ] from being a protagonist”, which Miren highlights is also applicable here.

### *A concluding note*

“Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women.” Maya Angelou.

A conversation with Miren about why and how she is looking at facilitation through a gender perspective has probed me to look more carefully at similar issues in my own environment. I think adopting a particular lens such as gender or race provide insights that might otherwise be overlooked. These are rarely talked or written about in the field of territorial development, and it can be a challenging and lonely process for an individual to manage such issues. I hope that the chapters and experiential posts trigger conversations on these sensitive issues that many facilitative actors probably face.

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## Experiential Post 9.2

# Reflective practice and change in action research and beyond

Isabel Heck<sup>1</sup>

### Resumen

#### *Práctica reflexiva y cambio en la investigación acción y más allá*

A través de su conexión con el capítulo de Miren Larrea titulado «elementos centrales de la investigación-acción en primera-persona para investigadores en la acción en segunda-persona», este capítulo esboza la importancia de la práctica reflexiva para los investigadores en la acción y de forma más amplia para los actores en proyectos colaborativos. La práctica reflexiva se considera un método que puede mejorar la transparencia y el reconocimiento de la contribución de cada actor y, por lo tanto, fortalecer la colaboración y el compromiso. Puede también conducir a una revisión de roles y dinámicas de poder en proyectos colaborativos.

### Abstract

#### *Reflective practice and change in action research and beyond*

Engaging with Miren Larrea's chapter entitled "Key features of first-person action research for second-person action researchers", this chapter outlines the relevance of reflective practice for action researchers and more broadly actors in collaborative projects. Reflective practice is seen as a method that can improve transparency and recognition of each actor's contribution and therefore strengthen collaboration and engagement. It can also lead to a review of roles and power dynamics in collaborative projects.

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Territorial actors at reflective workshop on participatory methods, led by the University Incubator of *Parole d'excluEs*. May 2019, Montreal-North.

Miren Larrea's chapter "Key features of first-person action research for second-person action researchers" illustrates the relevance of reflective practice for action researchers. Engaged since a number of years as a second-person action researcher, Larrea's uncomfortableness of being made invisible in an ARTD process led to a self-inquiry that helped her to reposition herself vis-à-vis other territorial actors. Her reflective process and a quest for recognition, transformed not only the action researcher herself, but also the collaborative dynamics with policy-makers.

Recognition and reflective practice (Hase, 2014; Hilden and Tikkamäki, 2013) are, in my experience as an action researcher for social and territorial development (Heck, 2017; Heck, this volume), among the most important keys to success while working in multi-stakeholder environments. Such environments are often marked by a number of inequalities, in terms of contributions, roles, resources and power. Being reflective, not only on actions developed, but also on roles and power, can improve transparency and recognition of each actor's contribution and therefore strengthen collaboration and engagement.

While Larrea's case illustrates how she—as a woman and action researcher—is empowering herself vis-à-vis male policymakers, such reflective practice is beneficial for any actor in a collaborative context. In my work, self-inquiry and reflexivity are strong levers for empowerment (Le Bossé, 2016), and also a way to tame one's own power, be it for researchers whose knowledge, status and input can be easily dominant in community settings, for citizens, to become aware of the relevance of their experiential knowledge, or for practitioners, to be conscious of their role and contribution in collaborative projects. Depending on the setting, territorial actors (whether they are practitioners, policy makers, researchers or citizens) can find themselves in more or less powerful positions. Reflective practice strongly benefits from dialogue to take a step back, minimize blind spots and shift perspectives, whether with an outsider (as Hillary Bradbury in Larrea's case), or collectively as a group of territorial actors (as in my experience in the Northeast Development Plan referred to in Heck, this volume, where such practice led to review roles). Insights gained from this process need to be implemented in practice to complete the transformation, which is in our experience the most difficult step (Fuentes Caceres, 2019).

Action researchers are in a privileged position to foster reflective practice in collaborative projects, as their mandate is linked to knowledge production and mobilization to trigger change. Extending first-person action research (Adams, 2014) to broader reflective practice in collaborative projects to critically assess actions, collaborative dynamics and roles, not only increases its transformative impact, but it also narrows the existing dichotomy between researchers and (other) territorial actors, which appears to be a goal shared by many authors of this book.

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## Experiential Post 9.3

# Reflection on the unseen, unheard, and unsaid

Jean Hartmann<sup>1</sup>

### Resumen

#### *Reflexiones sobre lo no visto, lo no oído, y lo no dicho*

Reflexiono partiendo desde mi práctica en la que corazón-mente-cuerpo se mueven con la marea y fluyen en dinámicas relacionales (persona-grupo-comunidad) en el lugar de trabajo; pero en este momento, dirijo mi atención a mi relación con mi trabajo, como si estuviera investigando junto con Miren. Me encuentro a mí misma deambulando cada vez con más profundidad en el terreno psico-social de la invisibilidad personal, inaudibilidad social, y la indiscutibilidad institucional; y reflexionando sobre cómo lo que no se ve, no se oye, y lo que no se dice en el lugar de trabajo puede reforzar la sensación de desplazamiento sentido por una persona. Yo he sentido esta invisibilidad —reconociendo que las fuerzas femeninas y masculinas pueden operar dentro de todos nosotros (mujeres y hombres por igual), pero emerger de forma diferente según lo que tenga presencia/ausencia en nuestros respectivos entornos de trabajo.

### Abstract

#### *Reflection on the unseen, unheard, and unsaid*

I reflect as a practitioner whose heart-mind-body attends to the ebb and flow of relational dynamics (person-group-community) in the workplace; but for this moment, direct attention to my relationship with my work, as if co-inquiring with Miren. I find myself wandering deeper into the psycho-social terrains of personal invisibility, social inaudibility, and institutional undiscussables; and pondering how the unseen, unheard, and the unsaid in the workplace may reinforce one's felt sense of displacement. I have felt this invisibility – recognizing that feminine and masculine forces may operate within all of us (women and men alike), but surface differently due to what is present/absent in our respective work environments.

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<sup>1</sup> PhD, Independent consultant serving as a nonprofit strategy advisor in the US, affiliated with AR+ community to expand and extend ART practices in both work and family relationships; a seeker of connective and soulful learning with others, offering time and space as a conscience partner for heartfelt conversations.



Disappearing act and double work of women. I am reminded that the female of the species carries the burden of hope against despair, and in crossing the dividing lines of the times, carries forth the next generation of lightness and boundless beauty.

*Why do we feel unseen, even when in a visible role?* Social invisibility is a phenomenon of *not* being recognized by a system or acknowledged for the essence of who we are and what we do as peoples. In Miren's presented case, the balance of territorial power shifted with reduced facilitation and lessened visibility of the action researchers; the resulting empowerment of stakeholders brought on disempowerment for the action researchers. Consider, however, there is power in one's presence when influence continues to be felt even in one's absence; there is power in influencing another's thoughts, feelings, and actions when advice is sought. As such, there is empowerment at one's disposal in any consultative role, in addition to the facilitative role. In my view, the double work of taking on the outer and inner facilitation roles is not "less than", but "more than" in one's holding of power/influence. The unseen hand, sometimes, is the more powerful.

*Why do we experience alienation and feel unheard inside our community of practice, as we speak out/to our authentic truths?* Through Miren's reflective account of ARTD's role transition from public governance facilitation to private consultative support, I located a masculine-assertive self. I begin to recognize that any form of invisibility (unseen), inaudibility (unheard), or undiscuss-ability (unsaid) in facilitative work can permeate our collaboration with one another. It's as if each conversation retains a shadow reminder of what we cannot accept in ourselves and/or with each other. Listening into Miren's words brings alive the currents of my internal silencing. Silence speaks with an invalidating voice, as forceful as spoken words of criticism. Sometimes, in the process of gaining recognition for who we are and what we do, it is necessary to put aside our outer image of ourselves and rise above our inner voices of self-criticism.



*What are the organizational unsaid and blind spots that we don't recognize or can't accept in ourselves as leaders or facilitators?* I, too, work as a process/dialogue facilitator in the micro space of social work, engaging with local community collaboratives in a system of care model that addresses neighborhood homelessness and intergenerational poverty. My *agora* is where black empowerment meets up with the white system of positional power. I, too, have had privileged views from the inside out, having witnessed actions with discriminatory effects when leadership must choose racial/political correctness over enactment of social/personal values. With Miren's claim for gendered role visibility, I am called into awareness of my own inherited sense of racial invisibility: an immigrant lost in the US landscape of gender diversity and indigenous struggles. In my helping work with the disenfranchised people, I have served on occasion in subservience without values alignment with my stakeholder participants, subordinating my own cultural identity and beliefs to maintain neutrality in facilitation. I now experience discomfort in my own suppressed silence and self-marginalization. Miren's self-inquiry of embodied invisibility has given me courage to claim my heritage with less hesitance. It makes sense that we bring all aspects of ourselves into our facilitative work to fully engage with one another.



## Chapter 10

# Responsible Research Communication as an experimental approach to Third-Person Inquiry in ARTD

*Patricia Canto-Farachala*<sup>1</sup>

### Resumen

*Comunicación de la Investigación Responsable como una aproximación experimental a la investigación acción en tercera persona en la IADT*

La Investigación Acción para el Desarrollo Territorial (IADT) nace como investigación en segunda persona y ha explorado la investigación en primera persona. En este capítulo propongo un enfoque experimental para la investigación en tercera persona. Ésta trata de promover el cambio dentro de las organizaciones, regiones o sociedad en general. El enfoque que propongo vincula específicamente la investigación en segunda persona con la investigación en tercera persona a través de la difusión dialógica de los resultados académicos que resultan de los procesos en segunda persona.

La investigación en tercera persona y la IADT conectan a través del marco de Comunicación de la Investigación Responsable (CIR). La CIR, desarrollada dentro de IADT, propone un marco para comunicar los resultados de investigación que surgen de procesos de investigación en segunda persona de forma dialógica, con el fin de que estos sean accionables en otros contextos.

Este capítulo parte del planteamiento de que la CIR puede ayudar a crear espacios experimentales para desarrollar procesos en tercera persona en la IADT. Para explorar este argumento, analizo los elementos del marco de la CIR en la práctica. Ello permite identificar su relevancia para la investigación en tercera persona. Con dicho fin estudio el caso de un espacio virtual diseñado conforme al marco de la CIR para compartir un resultado académico específico: un libro. Al momento de escribir este capítulo, el espacio virtual había estado en línea durante casi dos años, lo que permitió explorar si la CIR puede ayudar a crear espacios experimentales para procesos de investigación en tercera persona en la IADT.

Como resultado del análisis surge un marco reformulado para experimentar con procesos de investigación en tercera persona. En el marco reformulado, *smart* (inteligente) es una

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característica central porque aborda directamente el desafío del alcance que afrontan los procesos en segunda persona. Además, esta característica tiene una dimensión facilitadora *ex ante* e *in situ* que debe combinarse para que los resultados académicos de procesos en segunda persona sean accionables en otros contextos.

Una futura línea de investigación que surge de este capítulo es demostrar cómo se crean las conexiones entre la investigación en primera, segunda y tercera persona en la IADT. Por lo tanto, este capítulo es una invitación a la comunidad que trabaja en el marco de la IADT a utilizar el marco propuesto y asumir el desafío de experimentar con procesos de investigación en tercera persona. También es una invitación a la comunidad de investigadoras en la acción para continuar reflexionando sobre el reto de escalar el potencial de la investigación acción para promover el cambio social de forma democrática.

### **Abstrakt**

#### ***Responsible Research Communication als ein experimenteller Ansatz für Third-Person-Befragungen in ARTD***

Aktionsforschung für Territoriale Entwicklung (ARTD) entstand als 2nd-Person-Aktionsforschung und hat die 1st-Person-Aktionsforschung später exploriert. In diesem Kapitel schlage ich einen experimentellen Ansatz zur Untersuchung von 3rd-Person-ARTD vor. Die 3rd-Person-Befragung versucht den Wandel innerhalb von Organisationen, Regionen oder der Gesellschaft im Allgemeinen zu befördern. Der in diesem Kapitel vorgeschlagene Ansatz verbindet insbesondere die 2nd-Person-Forschung mit der 3rd-Person-Forschung durch die dialogische Verbreitung akademischer Ergebnisse, die aus 2nd-Person-Prozessen resultieren.

Die Verbindung zwischen 3rd-Person-Forschung und ARTD findet sich im Responsible Research Communication (RRC) Rahmen. Der Rahmen entstand innerhalb der ARTD, um Forschende mit anderen Forschenden und Praktizierenden in Dialogen zu verbinden. Darin sollten sie Konzepte und Rahmen kommunizieren, die aus ihrer 2nd-Person-Prozessen in Büchern oder akademischen Ergebnissen konzipiert wurden. Das Ziel ist es, diese Konzepte und Rahmenbedingungen auf andere Kontexte zu übertragen.

Ich argumentiere, dass das RRC-Framework dazu beitragen kann, experimentelle Räume für die Untersuchung durch 3rd-Person-Befragungen in ARTD zu schaffen. Um dieses Argument zu untersuchen, analysiere ich die Merkmale des RRC-Frameworks in der Praxis, um deren Relevanz für die Untersuchung durch 3rd-Person-Forschung zu ermitteln. Dies ist möglich, indem der Fall eines virtuellen Raums analysiert wird, der gemäß den Merkmalen des RRC-Frameworks entworfen wurde, um ein bestimmtes akademisches Ergebnis, nämlich ein Buch, gemeinsam zu nutzen. Zum Zeitpunkt des Schreibens war der virtuelle Raum seit fast zwei Jahren online. Die in diesem Zeitraum gewonnenen umfassenden Erkenntnisse haben dazu beigetragen, zu prüfen, ob RRC dazu beitragen kann, experimentelle Räume für die 3rd-Person-Forschung in ARTD zu schaffen.

Die Analyse führt zu einem neu formulierten Rahmen, um mit der 3rd-Person-Befragung von Dritten zu experimentieren. Im neu formulierten Framework ist «smart» (klug) ein zentrales Merkmal, da es die Herausforderung des Umfangs von 2nd-Person-Prozessen in ARTD direkt angeht. Darüber hinaus weist dieses Feature eine Ex-ante- und eine In-situ-Dimension auf, die kombiniert werden muss, um die Funktionsfähigkeit der Konzepte und Frameworks, die in anderen Kontexten geteilt werden, zu verbessern.

Zukünftige Forschungen müssen zeigen, wie Verbindungen zwischen 1st-, 2nd- und 3rd-Person-Forschung in ARTD hergestellt werden. Dieses Kapitel ist daher eine Einladung an die ARTD-Community, den vorgeschlagenen Rahmen zu nutzen und sich der Herausforderung zu stellen, mit 3rd-Person-Ermittlungsprozessen zu experimentieren. Es ist auch eine Einladung an die breite AR-Community, weiter darüber nachzudenken, wie das Potenzial der AR für einen größeren demokratischen sozialen Wandel erweitert werden kann.

# Responsible Research Communication as an experimental approach to Third-Person Inquiry in ARTD

## Introduction

Action Research for Territorial Development (ARTD) was born as second-person action research (Karlsen & Larrea, 2014), and has also explored first-person action research (Romano, 2019, Larrea, this volume). In this chapter I propose an experimental approach to third-person inquiry in ARTD. Third-person inquiry involves people who do not have face-to-face contact and may be geographically dispersed (Marshall, 2004). It tries to move beyond the group to reach a wider audience and promote change within organizations, regions or society more generally (Gustavsen, 2014). It has also been described as a fertile space in which others meet, often for the first time, to talk about things that really matter to them (Reason & McArdle, 2004). The approach that I propose in this Chapter specifically links second-person research with third-person research through the dialogical dissemination of academic outputs that result from second-person processes.

The connection between third-person research and ARTD is found in the Responsible Research Communication (RRC) framework (Canto-Farachala, 2019), conceptualized to facilitate connectivity. Karlsen & Larrea (2014) define connectivity in ARTD as a dialogical approach to transferability. It means that researchers may connect with other environments using the concepts, frameworks and cases developed in their second-person action research processes and enter a dialogue that enhances the workability of those concepts in new contexts. The authors acknowledge that in requiring the direct engagement of researchers, connectivity faces a challenge of scope and may only complement transferability.

RRC addresses connectivity's challenge of scope. It provides a framework to facilitate the dialogical transferability of research outputs in order to make new knowledge workable in other contexts. My argument is that RRC not only facilitates connectivity, it could also be an experimental form of third-person inquiry in ARTD. The goal of this Chapter is therefore to explore RRC as an experimental form of third-person inquiry in ARTD. Specifically, to answer the following research question: *What features of RRC are relevant for third-person inquiry in ARTD?*

In order to answer this research question, I analyze the case of a research output (a book) communicated dialogically, following the RRC framework. The dialogue that has been developing since 2017 between the authors of the book and other researchers and practitioners, provide rich insight that can help to identify the relevance of RRC for third person inquiry in ARTD.

In sum, in contrast to other approaches, that aim to expand AR's scope by connecting second-person processes (Gustavsen, 1996), so that learning can be taken from the project to the community (Marshall, 2004) or systemic level (Burns, 2014), I propose an experimental approach that connects second and third-person in ARTD through the dialogical communication of research outputs.

The chapter is structured as follows. In the first section I present the conceptual discussion that connects third-person inquiry and RRC. In the second section I describe the case and in the third section I discuss the case, drawing lessons that answer the research question.

## Conceptual framework

### *Third-person inquiry in Action Research*

Action research (AR) involves three different types of approaches to inquiry and change: first, second and third-person AR. Reason & McArdle (2004) describe those approaches as fol-

lows: (i) first-person inquiry refers to action researchers' own awareness on the effects on the outside world from their actions; (ii) second-person action research brings inquiry to face-to-face interaction in small groups on issues of mutual concern and (iii) third-person action research creates a wider community of inquiry involving persons who cannot be known to each other face-to-face. Third-person inquiry is a natural progression from inquiry in the first and second-person since, as people's understanding develops, they may want to influence a wider system (Marshall, 2004). In any case good action research will strive to stimulate inquiry at the three levels and create connections between them (Reason & McArdle, 2004) and integrate research and practice in ourselves, our teams and our organizations (Trullen & Torbert, 2016).

First and second-person AR are well established (Reason, 2001) and often seen as more directly connected because researchers involved in second-person processes need to also engage in self-reflective, first-person inquiry (Marshall, 2004). However, AR still needs to engage large systems into democratic inquiry (Reason, 2001) and extend its benefits beyond the local context (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, & Maguire, 2003), which calls for understanding the circumstances under which it can have broader effects (Greenwood, 2002). If this challenge of scale is not addressed, then AR is limited to making small differences in local situations despite its potential for addressing the wider social problems faced by humanity (Brydon-Miller *et al.*, 2003; Greenwood, 2002).

Reflecting on the attempts within AR to overcome the limits of local intervention, Greenwood (2003) refers to Paolo Freire's work during his term as a State Minister of Education in Brazil and to Björn Gustavsen's program on working life in Scandinavia as among the few attempts to approach larger structural problems through AR. Gustavsen's work (1992; 1996; 2003; 2014) is essentially about how to bring a larger number of workplaces and organizations into a change process based on democratic dialogue. He argues that AR should try to transcend the single case in favor of connected cases applying research resources in a distributive way to support the emergence of social movements (Gustavsen, 2003). Other authors argue (Reason, 2003) that this approach presents a wider vs. deeper dilemma, which may not be necessary if AR is understood as day-to-day collaborative inquiry by individuals, small groups, organizations, and society as a whole (Reason, 2003). Another recognized form of third-person inquiry is Participatory Action Research, which extends inquiry beyond the level of the group to the community (Marshall, 2004). Systems thinking and participatory action research combined, stand behind the proposal by Burns (2007; 2014) of emergent and flexible learning architectures able to involve many people in multiple parallel and interlocking inquiry processes.

### ***Responsible Research Communication in ARTD***

ARTD does not have a specific approach to third-person inquiry. Indeed, it is born as second-person action research, focused on how social researchers can act as change agents working at the micro level with other territorial actors. Indeed, Karlsen & Larrea (2014) show how changing communication patterns from linear to dialogical patterns through action research leads to change in territorial development. In my PhD dissertation I argue that changing communication patterns from linear to dialogical ones when communicating the systematized outputs of such research processes may also lead to change. The concept that captures this is Responsible Research Communication (RRC) (Canto-Farachala, 2019).

RRC is inspired in the concept of connectivity (Karlsen & Larrea, 2014). Connectivity refers to researchers' responsibility in the transferability of their research results. It suggests that researchers may extend that responsibility beyond publication and connect in a dialogue with other researchers and practitioners in order to enhance the workability of their new concepts and frameworks in new contexts. However, because it is dialogic, connectivity faces

a challenge of scope and can only complement transferability. RRC specifically addresses this challenge of scope thereby facilitating connectivity. It is defined as follows:

“A process that explores dialogue’s transformation potential in a mezzo space situated between the micro one, in which research outputs are communicated dialogically to a small number of participants in research projects, and the macro one, in which research outputs are distributed through printed and digital copies to a larger number of researchers and practitioners”. (Canto-Farachala, 2019, p. 197)

The mezzo space, which can be built following RRC’s six features (see Table 1) is larger than the micro space where dialogic face-to-face second-person AR processes take place, but smaller than the macro space in which only one-way communication is possible (i.e. distributing printed or digital copies of a book). While in this latter space dialogue, and its potential to transform is no longer present, in the mezzo space dialogue is still feasible. I argue that the mezzo space, is the space to experiment with third-person inquiry in ARTD.

**Table 1. The six features of Responsible Research Communication**

Change-oriented	A dialogical process is made of reflection and action that lead to change.
Smart	A smart dialogical process overcomes the time-consuming nature of real time face-to-face dialogue through its deferred and asynchronous features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Deferred means that researchers prepare their part of the dialogue beforehand: materials, questions and general answers to help all participants reflect on the new concepts and frameworks.</li> <li>— Asynchronous means that researchers answer comments or reflections after they have been posed by participants.</li> </ul>
Facilitative	Dialogue among actors with different types of knowledge needs to be facilitative to reduce the barriers that may hamper understanding among them.
Inclusive	Through dialogue territorial actors become co-researchers and the conditions for conflict to emerge need to be facilitated.
Emergent	Dialogue is dynamic, ongoing and changing. It unfolds step by step and cannot be planned.
Collective	Keeping the dialogue alive is a collective responsibility that in turn depends on what is being made by dialogue collectively.

Source. Adapted from Canto-Farachala (2019).

This section presented the conceptual discussion that connects third-person inquiry in AR and RRC. The first part reviewed the discussion on third-person inquiry in the AR literature, which is mainly about the challenge of bringing AR from the small group to larger systems or beyond the local context. The second part presented RRC, an analytical framework that emerges from within ARTD to address the challenge of scope of connectivity. Connectivity calls for making new knowledge that emerges from AR processes, workable in other contexts. In addressing connectivity’s challenge of scope RRC, like third-person inquiry, is concerned with extending change beyond the group where AR processes develop. RRC could therefore be a form third-person inquiry in ARTD. The following sections present and discuss a case that can help to identify the relevance of RRC to third person inquiry in ARTD.

## Description of the case

This section presents the case of a book that is being communicated following the RRC framework. It is a virtual mezzo space that has been hosting a written dialogue since October 2017, that is, for almost two years at the time of writing. It is available in open access in the following link: <https://dgroups.org/groups/perfadt>. It is divided into two parts. The first part introduces the case, explaining how the mezzo space was created. The second part analyses the mezzo space in practice specifically looking into RRC's different features and how they are relevant to third-person inquiry.

## Introduction to the case

The mezzo space described in this section was created through an AR process that has been described elsewhere (Canto-Farachala, 2019; Canto-Farachala & Larrea, 2020). The mezzo space is presented as a case in this section from the lens of third-person inquiry. It therefore advances new knowledge on the case beyond what has already been published.

However, in order to make the case easier to understand for readers who are not familiar with the above, it is important to bear in mind a few facts. The AR process that created the virtual space involved two action researchers (Pablo Costamagna and Miren Larrea) who played the role of stakeholders or problem-owners. They had just finished the manuscript of their book *Facilitative Actors of Territorial Development* (Costamagna & Larrea, 2018) which conceptualizes on their second-person research and had not yet been published. They agreed to participate in an AR process that I facilitated when I was undertaking my PhD. The AR process had the objective of exploring a dialogical approach to communicating their book. Hereinafter I refer to Costamagna and Larrea as the authors of *the book*.

The AR process had an academic and a practical result. The academic result was the analytical framework on RRC described in the previous section. The practical result was a virtual space in which the authors of *the book* connect in a dialogue with other researchers and practitioners in order to make their concepts and frameworks workable in other contexts. To that aim, participants in the virtual space are faced with questions that help them to reflect on said concepts and frameworks from their own experiences and to share their reflections with the other participants. It therefore enables learning to be taken from the project to a wider audience (Gustavsen 2014) or community level (Marshall, 2004).

As mentioned earlier, the virtual space was made available online in October 2017. It is made of two distinct spaces: an interactive journey and a meeting space, called agora. Each of them hosts a different type of dialogue. The following descriptions of each space are adapted and expanded from Canto-Farachala, Costamagna, Eizagirre, & Larrea (2018).

- a) The interactive journey is based on a *deferred dialogue*, the concept found to capture a type of dialogue that is feasible for the authors of *the book* and the researchers and practitioners with whom they connect with (hereinafter referred to as travelers). The journey guides travelers through a tour with different stops that match one or more chapters of *the book*. Each stop is stacked with materials that hold the voice of the authors: the original chapters of *the book*, summaries of the chapters for travelers with less time to read, and videos in which the authors explain and contextualize the concepts and frameworks of the different chapters. Through these materials the authors "speak" to travelers. Before heading to a different stop, travelers are asked to write down the answer to questions posed by the authors of *the book*. They do so in a space in which the answers written by the travelers who have passed before them

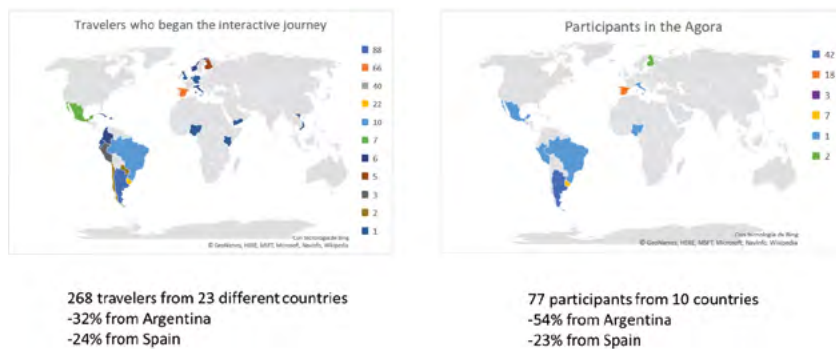


can also be read. The questions posed (2 in each stop) are designed to help travelers reflect on the concepts presented in that stop, connecting them to their own experience. Through their written answers they “speak back” to the authors of *the book*, thereby completing the loop of the deferred dialogue.

- b) The meeting space or agora is based on an *asynchronous dialogue*, the concept found to capture a dialogue that does not develop simultaneously but is emergent in the sense that any participant can pose new questions and discussion threads at any given moment with the expectation that a discussion will follow. The agora is therefore an emergent space with no material prepared beforehand. What participants have in common is having had completed the interactive journey before joining. Indeed, when travelers finish their journey, they are asked to answer a survey. One of the questions posed is if they would like to continue engaged in an ongoing discussion on the role of facilitative actors in territorial development. Those who agree, (hereinafter referred to as participants) are granted access to the agora. In the agora responsibility for keeping the dialogue alive is a collective responsibility.

As mentioned earlier, dialogue in the virtual space, both during the interactive journey and in the agora is written, so participants do not have face-to-face interaction. This does not mean that they don’t know each other. Many don’t, this being more the case in the interactive journey. Many of those who do know each other work together because they are part of the research teams of the authors of *the book*, who are based in Argentina and Spain. Both teams also interact in joint projects. As can be seen in Figure 2 the largest share of participants in both the interactive journey and in the agora come from both countries. Moreover, almost 80% of participants in the agora are based in Argentina and Spain.

**Figure 1. A geographically dispersed virtual space**



Source. Author’s own elaboration from <https://dgroups.org/groups/peradt>  
 Note: Data retrieved in August 2019.

As explained in section 1, the virtual space was built following the features of the RRC framework. In the following section I examine each one of those features in practice in order to determine their relevance for third-person inquiry. My data sources are both from the virtual space and the survey that travelers are asked to complete at the end of the interactive journey. I have permission from participants to use the data for research purposes. I shared the manuscript of this Chapter with those whose data is reproduced to ensure they agree with how their quotes are presented.

### *RRC in practice*

The RRC framework helps to build spaces (mezzo spaces) in which dialogue is present when communicating academic outputs from second-person processes. I argue that in so doing it brings inquiry from second-person to third-person processes through the dialogical communication of research outputs. In the case presented in this chapter the mezzo space is a virtual space built to communicate *the book*.

In what follows I analyze the virtual space by looking into how each one of the features of the RRC framework has played out in practice over the two-year period since it was made available online in order to determine their relevance for third-person inquiry.

### CHANGE-ORIENTED

Dialogue, as conceived in ARTD, is made of reflection and action, inextricably linked to change. That is why RRC's first feature is "change-oriented". The authors of *the book* identified two change objectives: (i) to help participants to discover themselves as facilitative actors in territorial development and (ii) to continue writing *the book*. The first change objective is addressed in the interactive journey and the second one in the agora. While in the interactive journey, travelers are faced with fixed questions that relate to the contents of *the book*, in the agora, participants are free to share reflections and questions beyond the contents of the book, on their own role as facilitative actors of territorial development.

Data to determine if the change objective for the interactive journey has been met is found in the survey that travelers are asked to answer when they finish the journey. The survey is not compulsory. At the time of writing 67 out of a total of 268 travelers had answered the survey, that is 25 % of participants. One question asks travelers what they have learned. Out of the 67 answers at the time of writing 67 % said that they had learned new concepts to help them in their practice; 55 % that they had learned new ways of interacting with other actors and 44 % that they had learned a new name for a role they had already been performing<sup>2</sup>.

Evidence of change was also found in the data from the discussion threads in the agora. A researcher shared having used the interactive journey in a second-person AR process that had the objective of helping a group of policymakers to develop their role as facilitative actors. The researcher facilitated the policymakers' journey and combined the journey with face-to-face workshops. In the words of the researcher:

"Using the journey with a group of policymakers [...] has led us to define new actions in our practice". Entry in the agora, June 3, 2019.

Regarding the objective set for the agora as to continue writing *the book*, participants have conceptualized new features for particular concepts of *the book*, like: "facilitation in the shadow", "pride in invisibility" and "negotiated invisibility" (Canto & Larrea, forthcoming).

Change-oriented is one of the most important features of the RRC framework and the one most relevant for third-person research. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, third-person action research aims to bring change beyond the small group to as broad a front as possible. Through RRC, learning processes from second-person research (i.e. *the book*) can connect with third-person inquiry to bring change beyond the small group in which second-person research took place.

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<sup>2</sup> Participants can tick as many answers as they wish from several options offered, so the figures do not add up to 100.

## SMART

The RRC framework helps to build mezzo spaces made up of a group of participants that is larger than the number of participants in micro, second-person processes but still smaller than the macro space that can be only be reached through linear forms of communication. The main characteristic of mezzo spaces is that dialogue—and its transformation potential—is still feasible.

The feature of the RRC framework directly involved with creating mezzo spaces is the “smart” feature. As described in Table 10.1, it addresses the time-consuming nature of real time face-to-face dialogue, making dialogue actionable beyond the small group. Smart is made of the two types of actionable dialogues described in the previous section: deferred and asynchronous.

Data on how each has developed in practice is found in the interactive journey, in the survey and in the discussion threads in the agora. At the time of writing a deferred dialogue had developed in the interactive journey between the authors of *the book* and 268 travelers from 23 different countries. Likewise, the asynchronous dialogue developing in the agora had hosted 24 discussion threads related to the frameworks and concepts of *the book*.

For some travelers the deferred dialogue limited their potential to interact with other travelers. This was expressed as follows by one of them:

“I think travelers should be encouraged to create new questions, to interact with other travelers”. Excerpt from a survey completed on January 11, 2018.

However, contradictory as it might seem, in the agora where participants are encouraged to pose their own questions and interact among them, participants sometimes found it difficult to engage. This is illustrated in the following quote:

“It is sometimes difficult to participate in the discussions because it takes me a while to reflect and when I finally think I have something to contribute, the discussion has evolved to something else...sometimes it is impossible to take half an hour off a week to sit down and elaborate a written answer”. Entry in the Agora, April 3, 20183.

The deferred dialogue that develops during the interactive journey and the asynchronous dialogue that develops in the agora, both of which conform RRC’s smart feature, may seem of a lesser quality than the face-to-face dialogues that develop in second-person processes. However, they are feasible dialogues when it comes to communicating research outputs, which is a part of the research cycle normally not funded in academia.

Those seemingly lesser quality but feasible dialogues are critical for third-person inquiry because they are the way to overcome the challenge of scope faced by dialogical processes. In the virtual space, the authors of *the book* have engaged dialogically with 268 travelers from 23 different countries. These numbers clearly overpass the small groups in which their face-to-face second-person processes took place.

## FACILITATIVE

The facilitative feature in RRC calls for being aware that dialogue among researchers or practitioners with different types of knowledge is not automatic and needs to be facilitative in terms of reducing the barriers that may hamper understanding between them.

<sup>3</sup> All quotes are my own translations from Spanish. When this is not the case it is noted.

In the virtual space data shows that travelers who did not have previous experience as facilitative actors had difficulty understanding the concepts. This was especially the case for masters' students who did not have previous experience and completed the journey on their own (without face-to-face interaction with their tutor) during class:

"I felt it difficult to answer some of the questions because of my lack of experience". Excerpt from a survey completed on February 15, 2018.

"The questions were targeted at professionals only, so that I as a masters' student was not able to answer them". Excerpt from a survey completed on February 15, 2018.

This contrasts with answers from another set of students who completed the journey sharing the process in face-to-face sessions with their tutors and fellow students in class:

"Thank you for this tool that facilitates learning both for people with more experience and for students who are new to the field". Excerpt from a survey completed on October 10, 2018.

Second-person processes are context-based. Therefore, as Karlsen and Larrea (2014) suggest, when looking to enhance the workability of their results in different contexts dialogue is important. As I argued in the previous section, RRC's smart feature makes dialogue actionable when communicating research outputs in an academic environment in which there are normally no resources available for communicating research results, let alone dialogically.

However, because smart dialogues are not face-to-face dialogues, they need a careful design that can make understanding easier among people from different backgrounds, disciplines, cultures etc. An extra effort is needed in terms of language, visual design and other tools. This is illustrated in the entries above that show what happened when a facilitator was present (the master's students tutor) during the interactive journey and when a facilitator was not present.

Facilitative therefore means that deferred dialogues need to be facilitated *ex-ante*. This is done through the careful design and planning of the mezzo space. However, analyzing this in practice shows that while *ex-ante* facilitation was enough for experienced travelers, complementary face-to-face facilitation was required by non-experienced travelers, such as masters' students.

This reflection is relevant for third-person inquiry because while *ex-ante* facilitation is inextricably linked to deferred dialogues, sometimes complementary *in situ* facilitation may be necessary, depending on the profiles of the participating researchers and practitioners.

## INCLUSIVE

In RRC inclusion means that through dialogue territorial actors become co-researchers and new knowledge is co-generated. However, cogeneration requires handling conflicting perspectives on the issues discussed and handling conflict requires *in-situ*, not *ex-ante* facilitation. *In-situ* facilitation requires time and resources that are rarely available when communicating research outputs and would run contrary to the "smart" feature. Inclusive was therefore defined as a tribute to the diversity of views, reflections, approaches, knowledge and perspectives originally excluded from *the book*.

The difficulties inherent in creating truly inclusive spaces are reinforced by the following quotes:

“Reading the first debates that took place in the agora I felt that there was nothing more that I could contribute from my first- person experience working as a communicator in action research projects”. Entry in the Agora, June 4, 2019.

“I did not feel capable of responding to the debates taking place in the agora [...] my lack of experience as a facilitator made me feel insecure about the validity of my contributions when compared to the contributions made by more experienced facilitators”. Entry in the Agora, June 4, 2019.

Participants also highlighted that dialogue in the agora was taking place mainly between two research teams that held previous ties, some of whom knew each other personally:

“...dialogue in the agora takes place mainly between the two communities that already existed before the creation of the virtual space...”. Entry in the Agora, May 30, 2019.

Inclusive, for third-person inquiry is relevant as a high goal that needs to be approximated on a case by case basis, like in the virtual space. Making it actionable will always be a challenge. In any case, participants in third person inquiry seem to need experience with understanding and acting together in the near environment, as pointed out by Gustavsen (2014).

#### EMERGENT AND COLLECTIVE

These two features are analyzed jointly because they both refer specifically to the asynchronous dialogue that develops in the agora. An asynchronous dialogue is a fully-fledged dialogue, but participants do not need to engage simultaneously (see Table 10.1). It is emergent because it is spontaneous, ongoing and cannot be planned. It is collective because keeping the dialogue alive (to keep writing *the book*) is a collective responsibility. At the time of writing there were a total of 228 entries distributed among 40 active participants and 24 discussion threads in an ongoing, spontaneous dialogue.

Data found in the discussion threads shows that the collective responsibility for keeping the dialogue alive was experienced negatively by some participants. As is shown in the following entries the lack of facilitation in the agora was described as hampering the further development of dialogue within it:

“[...] we all share the responsibility for keeping dialogue alive, but as happens in territories, processes are more dynamic when they are facilitated”. Entry in the Agora, June 3, 2019.

“In the AR processes in which I have participated...the process is always systematized and shared with those participating, thus strengthening the feeling of having built something together. If this does not happen, that which has been built is not visible”. Entry in the Agora, May 30, 2019.

“I think this space needs to be facilitated...it can help to keep the process alive [...] I sometimes sense that there is a feeling that facilitating a space like this would make it less authentic or something”. Entry in the Agora, April 8, 2018.

This was followed by an explanation by one of the authors of *the book* as to why a decision had been made early on to not facilitate the space (the need to be “smart”), adding the following:

“All of us here are facilitators, so we understand that the potential of this space will be reinforced if each of us in different moments and for specific discussions facilitates dialogues, handing the relay from one to another”. Entry in the Agora, April 9, 2018.

The main conclusion from the above is that participants seemed to have the expectation that someone would have the specific role of facilitating the discussions in the agora although the space was built based on an idea of a collective facilitation. I argue that this is again closely related to the time and resources available for undertaking this role and on the perceived value for participants of engaging with other researchers and practitioners in an emergent space.

The lesson for third-person inquiry is that the responsibility for doing the *in situ* facilitation is likely to fall on the researchers doing the communication of their work (in the case analyzed in this chapter, the authors of *the book*) or on the researcher or practitioner bringing the concepts and frameworks to their own practice (AR processes with policymakers and/or master courses in the case analyzed in this Chapter). Moreover, participation in emergent spaces may be expected to be stronger for a short period after the deferred dialogue has ended and will remain alive for as long as the discussion remains interesting and useful for participants.

### **Discussion: RRC as third-person inquiry is smart**

In section 1 I argued that the RRC framework could help to create experimental spaces for third-person inquiry in ARTD. In order to explore this argument, I analyzed each one of the features of the RRC framework to see how they have played out in practice over the two-year period since a mezzo space built to communicate a book was built. The mezzo space is a virtual space in which two action researchers connect with other researchers and practitioners to communicate a book, that systematized their second-person research, dialogically.

The case shows that RRC’s smart feature (through its deferred and emergent dialogues) is critical because it directly addresses the challenge of scope faced by dialogical processes, on which third-person inquiry is based. An important finding from the case is that the *ex ante* dimension inherent in the facilitative feature may need to be complemented by *in situ* facilitation. The emergent dialogue is the space to develop said *in situ* facilitation, where facilitation is likely to fall on the researchers communicating their research outputs in order to make them workable in other contexts or on the researchers or practitioners bringing them to their own practice.

So, the answer to the research question posed in this chapter What features of RRC are relevant for third-person inquiry in ARTD? is summarized in Table 10.2.

**Table 10.2. RRC as third-person inquiry in ARTD is smart**

Change-oriented	Engaging in a dialogic process to communicate research outputs is driven by an explicit change objective
Smart	Deferred: A deferred dialogue is a written dialogue that takes place delayed in time between action researchers sharing a specific research output and other action researchers or practitioners interested in said research output. A deferred dialogue needs ex-ante facilitation, designed with a heightened awareness of the need to reduce barriers that may emerge from participants' different profiles, backgrounds, disciplines...
	Emergent: An emergent dialogue is dynamic, ongoing and changing, unfolding step by step, facilitated in situ by the researchers communicating their research outputs or by participating researchers or practitioners. It may take different forms (virtual, face-to-face...)
Inclusive	It is open and inclusive of the views, reflections, approaches, knowledge and perspectives originally excluded from the research output that is being communicated.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

In sum, the reformulated RRC framework can enhance ARTD's transformation potential by complementing its first and second-person approaches with an experimental third-person approach. In contrast to other third-person approaches (Gustavsen, Burns...) the approach that I propose connects second-person with third-person research specifically through the dialogical dissemination of academic outputs.

Writing this Chapter left me with a sense of excitement because I envisage a path where much research still needs to be done. We need more cases and we need to show how connections are being created between first, second- and third-person research (Reason & McArdel, 2004), or how they are being combined (Trullen & Torbert, 2016) in the benefit of territorial development. My contribution to ARTD is therefore more of an invitation to the ARTD community to walk that path and experiment third-person inquiry through the dialogical communication of their research outputs.

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## Short Chapter 10

# Experiencing responsible research communication and collaboration

*Petra Schweizer-Ries*<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstrakt**

#### *Verantwortungsvolle Forschungskommunikation und -zusammenarbeit erleben*

Dieses Minikapitel ist das Ergebnis einiger wunderbarer Dialoge, die sich zwischen Patricia und mir (real face-to-face, per E-Mail und virtuell face-to-face) über ihre Forschungsarbeit und die Möglichkeiten des 3rd-Person-Dialogs über das Internet entwickelt haben. Unser gegenseitiges Kennenlernen begann auf einem ganz besonderen Treffen der Gemeinschaft Action Research + Transformation (AR+T) in Göteborg im April 2019. Dort wurden wir so miteinander verbunden, dass es eine Freude war, diese Arbeit gemeinsam zu entwickeln, obwohl wir sehr unterschiedliche wissenschaftliche Hintergründe haben. Jetzt sind wir miteinander verbunden, und —aus meiner Sicht— kam es aus unseren persönlichen Kontakten. Ob real oder virtuell, sie waren sehr tief und intensiv, und ich nehme an, wir sind für immer miteinander verbunden. Diese Überlegung bringt mich zu ihrem Thema, denn meiner Meinung nach braucht der virtuelle Raum, den sie für den Aufbau einer Gemeinschaft rund um die Kommunikation eines Buches entwickelt hat, einen persönlichen Kontakt, damit er funktioniert. Meine Erfahrung aus einer anderen virtuellen Gemeinschaft, an der ich teilnehme, ist, dass nicht alle von uns einen persönlichen Kontakt haben müssen, aber einige sollten es haben, weil es hilft, Vertrauen und Geduld miteinander aufzubauen und auf dieser Grundlage unsere gemeinsame Arbeit zu entwickeln, um unsere Ziele zu erreichen. Auf diese Weise haben Patricia und ich den ganzen Weg von Chalmers bis zu diesem Minikapitel geschafft.

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**Resumen*****Experimentar la comunicación de la investigación responsable y la colaboración***

Este mini capítulo es el resultado de algunos diálogos maravillosos que se desarrollaron entre Patricia y yo (cara a cara, por medio de correos electrónicos y cara a cara virtual) en relación con su trabajo de investigación sobre las posibilidades de diálogo en tercera persona a través de Internet. Nos conocimos en una reunión muy especial de la comunidad de Investigación de Acción + Transformaciones (AR+T) en Gotemburgo en abril de 2019. Allí conectamos de tal manera, que fue un placer desarrollar este trabajo juntas, a pesar de que venimos de disciplinas científicas muy distinta. Ahora estamos conectados y —desde mi punto de vista— eso ha sido el resultado de nuestros contactos cara a cara, reales o virtuales. Han sido muy profundos e intensos y creo que estaremos conectadas siempre. Esta reflexión conecta con su tema de investigación en el sentido de que, en mi opinión, el espacio virtual que desarrolló para construir una comunidad en torno a la comunicación de un libro necesita algún contacto cara a cara para que funcione. Mi experiencia en otra comunidad virtual es que no todas las personas participantes necesitan tener contacto cara a cara, pero algunos sí, porque eso ayuda a generar confianza y paciencia entre todos y esa es la base para desarrollar nuestro trabajo conjunto y alcanzar nuestros objetivos. Así es como Patricia y yo hicimos el camino desde Chalmers hasta este mini capítulo.

## Experiencing responsible research communication and collaboration

### Hypothesis

Creating third person research dialogs in a virtual community requires some profound face-to-face interactions at least with some members of the virtual community for building trust and confidence, and these interactions can be virtual as well.

### How we became connected

Patricia and I met at the Action Research + Transformation<sup>2</sup> (AR+T) facilitated real world meeting in Gothenburg in March 2019. There we had some profound face-to-face interactions. When she offered me to be part of her “book-project”, I did not know anything about it, I just said: yes. From this time on a journey started that was extremely interesting (sometimes also demanding) for me, but always with positive aspirations, as Patricia as well as Miren where motivating me to keep on going together. Reflecting on what motivated me so much, the main point is the relatedness and the relation that we (specially Patricia and me) developed in a very short time in the Gothenburg meeting. This meeting was facilitated in a very special relating way and I am still very deeply related to other colleagues from this meeting. That had not happened before in any other “normal” scientific meeting. This special Gothenburg-meeting was facilitated by Hilary Bradbury and her team in a wonderful open and connecting way (not without tensions). It was designed in a way that we could develop

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<sup>2</sup> This transformation means the big societal transformation urgently needed, see e.g. IPCC, 2015, ICBS, 2019, WBGU, 2011.

these connections, we were asked to do this kind of projects together and there was the possibility to join other meetings and further connect afterwards.

So somehow Patricia and me are personally connected but supported by this larger net of AR+T-researchers that want to facilitate the big societal transformation. This includes transforming science and the way researchers involve themselves.

### Little bit of my back-ground

My background comes from Psychology, more the kind of main stream psychology that is still taught at our universities as a natural science. I read e.g. Lewin and later even gave classes about the field theory because, as it happened that I became an environmental psychologist not seeing the individual separated from others and from the natural environment. Later I became a sustainability scientist and I entered in this kind of transition/transformation research, where we are not only allowed to facilitate change, but we are asked to do so, it is our “calling<sup>3</sup>”.

Since I am teaching, I tried to make it dialogical and later I learned that this is asked for also in Education for Sustainable Development and now in the University of the Future<sup>4</sup>. I am aware of this since I happened to know a successor of Lewin, Senge and others at the MIT and his Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) offered by the Presencing Institute (<https://www.presencing.org>), which was designed together with the Buthan Happyness Institute and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ)<sup>5</sup> in 2015. I joined in 2017 and read the U theory written by Scharmer (2007). The next year I joined my student in a normal course, with marcs and credits. However, in 2019 I did the course (mainly the life sessions) with a team of territorial facilitators in the Saarland. Besides, the u.lab-research-community (URC) —that is developing with some facilitation there— offered u.lab-S with a lot of facilitation and a virtual community that exists now since 2019. This community represents for me something that could be compared with the platform Patricia is writing about and using, called “perfadt”.

In this Internet Community I experienced how connected we can be with persons we never met and will not meet in the future. It developed via face-to-face interchanges in the Internet with a special design of listening and generative dialog (see u.lab: transforming business, society and self). We still practice this in so called *case clinics* in *coaching circles*, where we facilitate by ourselves according to an offered methodology. I learned there that we can be deeply connected, wherever we are in the world and we can interchange and further develop ideas, research methods and theories together to support the societal change urgently needed.

Before experiencing this, I would have said that you can never be connected to someone that you have not meet in person like with one you have talked with face-by-face, embraced and met personally. After this experience I learned that in this large community I can come into dialogue with persons without the need of face-to-face contact, as they belong to this trustful community which communicates in this special way, listening, sensing and generating the future together.

I suppose that this is what Patricia is searching for in Chapter 10 of this book when she asks for “third person action research” to create “a wider community of inquiry involv-

<sup>3</sup> In German it is called “Aufgabe” or “Berufung”.

<sup>4</sup> There are several visions of how a Transition University (LIT), The University of the Future (LIT) or the 21<sup>st</sup> Century University (LIT) could look like. All of them are clear, it is something else than we do now, more supporting societal change and the big societal transformation (WBGU, 2011) we need now.

<sup>5</sup> English: German Corporation for International Cooperation GmbH

ing persons who cannot be known to each other face-to-face". She wants to address this so that "AR is [not] limited to making small differences in local situations despite its potential for addressing the wider social problems faced by humanity (Brydon-Miller *et al.*, 2003; Greenwood, 2002, cited by Canto in Chapter 10).

### **My connection with Patricia's work**

If I understand it right, Patricia wants to create a "fertile space in which other meet, often for the first time, to find time to talk about things that really matter to them" (Reason & McArdle, 2004 cited by Canto in Chapter 10) as a third person inquiry that is facilitated by people that use it and bring it into live. I compare this with our u.lab-S-Community, where people with a special background enter (this is the "deferred dialog" by Patricia) and later "emergent dialog" happens (which in that community is called generative dialog). And it happens by itself, just by using the platform. In Patricia's work it is seen as a chance to interact once the research project is finished and researchers are not paid any longer for the work. Publishing it is not the end, like I learned from my professor at the university: "research is only finished when it is published", and Patricia and her colleagues are going further: they want to interchange the published word and further develop and publish again, like in this book, which was produced together. However, before writing, we need to understand, interchange and find joint topics to write about.

### **My first experience with the forum described by Patricia**

Not being part of the community originally participating and not knowing how to be a territorial facilitator, when entering the platform constructed by Patricia and her colleagues, I had to understand first, what it all was about. Reading and understanding only English and Spanish, it was quite difficult also to follow the introductory videos. Reading the papers was easy, but I did not reach the stage of discussing the book chapters due to personal time limits and difficulties in finding the right space for this.

Anyhow, I like the idea of further developing our works after publication and interconnecting for further development of our research work and I would like to join further on to bring in my findings and may-be even discuss findings before publishing.

### **Meetings and video can help**

I suppose that the forum Patricia is writing and experimenting with would become more lively if it were facilitated a little bit, e.g. by regular meetings and may be face-to-face video sessions. Then, after the writing, dialog could continue and the target could still be to publish together. This could be a great support for facilitators, who do research but get stuck without publishing their valuable findings.

### **Wonderful experience of meeting Patricia virtually face-to-face**

The breakthrough in our joint work was, from my point of view, the day when we had one zoom session together which had been designed following the *stakeholder interview*-method of the u.lab. I had read her paper before and had many questions about it, maybe even some

prejudices. We used this interview for understanding each other better and I got to know much better what was Patricia's target was, even it had been properly written in her draft, as I later experienced reading the newer version of the chapter again. In this zoom meeting we really felt connected, and talking face-to-face was important as face-to-face we do not only hear the words, but see all the non-verbal interactive patterns that should not be underestimated.

### **All the best for the forum**

I learned that the forum came out of a research team having many face-to-face meetings, also in person, sitting together, working, having fun and enjoying the time and experiences together, like we did in Gothenburg in our AR+T meeting, though maybe less intensive and not designed like that. Afterwards they are connected like we are now. I wish the forum very much to keep this joyful and good experience and further develop it through writing together. And I would be happy to experiment a little bit more with you all to make it more lively, if wished.

### **Acknowledgement**

This short chapter developed from my reflections about Patricia's chapter and from my interchange in the personal and virtual relationship via digitalized means. It is difficult to understand each other, but you can do it when taking care of a respectful communication and carrying on with relationship. I want to thank Patricia for this wonderful experience!

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## Post experiencial 10

# Tejidos híbridos e investigación participativa de los movimientos sociales y comunicacionales

*Alejandro Barranquero*<sup>1</sup>

### **Abstract**

*Hybrid social fabric and participatory research of social and communicational movements*

Participatory research and a responsible scientific communication must help strengthen the weaving of networks and co-responsibility that characterizes social movements, and specifically, the movement for the reform of communication. Protecting and widening human rights requires enabling hybrid dynamics of action research that will implement dialogues in face to face spaces, as well as in third person research processes facilitated nowadays in virtual spaces. It is in both scenarios where communication of social movements strengthens in a vital and necessary meeting with critical research, applied and oriented to the transformation of what is instituted.

### **Resumen**

*Tejidos híbridos e investigación participativa de los movimientos sociales y comunicacionales*

La investigación participativa y una comunicación científica responsable deben acompañar al fortalecimiento del tejido de redes y corresponsabilidades que caracteriza a los movimientos sociales y, en específico, al movimiento de reforma de la comunicación. Proteger y ensanchar los derechos humanos [requiere] habilitar dinámicas híbridas de investigación acción que implementen diálogos tanto en el terreno presencial como en el de la investigación en tercera persona que hoy facilitan los espacios virtuales. Es en ambos escenarios en los que la comunicación de los movimientos sociales se fortalece en un encuentro vital y necesario con la investigación de tipo crítico, aplicado y orientado a la transformación de lo instituido.

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Imagen libre muy característica del movimiento de reforma comunicacional.

El artículo de Patricia Canto se adentra en el complejo escenario de la investigación acción para el desarrollo territorial, un terreno en el que el Instituto Vasco de Competitividad-Orkestra está marcando senderos firmes para el desarrollo de futuras exploraciones. El capítulo nos invita a examinar la original experiencia virtual —o de investigación acción en tercera persona— de una plataforma de intercambio científico que proporciona viajes interactivos y dialógicos entre usuarios de distintas latitudes. En este espacio, las relaciones se mueven en un terreno en el que los intercambios presenciales son muchas veces disputados por los tecnológicamente mediados. No obstante, y a la luz de investigaciones recientes, el territorio digital y el presencial son escenarios complementarios que conviven, interactúan y se refuerzan. Así, las dimensiones online y *off-line* de la participación deben ser percibidas como una vital ventana de oportunidades para explorar dinámicas participativas como las que analiza el artículo, en especial si queremos avanzar en la senda del cambio social progresista.

La experiencia relatada también me lleva a reflexionar acerca de las estrategias de construcción de saberes comunitarios y coparticipados que, desde hace años, vienen desarrollando movimientos sociales de la más diversa índole: desde los colectivos antiglobalización a las primaveras árabes; desde los estallidos anti-austeridad en Europa a las luchas sectoriales de las mareas en España por la salud o la educación. En la actualidad, el movimiento feminista, los jóvenes del *Fridays for Future* o las protestas de jubilados y pensionistas también han sido capaces de articular nuevos modos de organización que desafían los procesos de valorización del capital y que articulan saberes y estilos de vida al margen del Estado y del mercado. Dos de las señas más distintivas de estos movimientos son el carácter igualitario y libre de los diálogos que entre ellos se tejen, y la convivencia de nuevos y viejos repertorios de protesta, de los que son buen ejemplo los intercambios online o las asambleas presenciales. Dichas reciprocidades prefiguran asimismo modos de ser, hacer y pensar que son comunicacionalmente responsables y que invitan a la investigación a acompañar el devenir de los movimientos sociales y sus repertorios contenciosos.

La participación y el carácter híbrido son también características del movimiento por la democratización de la comunicación que hoy abandonan un buen número de medios comunitarios y ciudadanos, de asociaciones profesionales, o de plataformas ciberactivistas que



apuestan por modelos de comunicación más diversos e inclusivos. Estos son los territorios que llevo investigando desde hace años y a los que acompaño en sus luchas, si bien la lectura del texto de Canto me hizo preguntarme acerca de las causas que provocan que el movimiento por la reforma de la comunicación no sea tan conocido por la opinión pública, o que haya sido incapaz de articular redes tan sólidas y duraderas como las que hoy se entretajan entre jóvenes, jubilados o mujeres. El tejido de redes y corresponsabilidades en los movimientos sociales se puede abordar desde los rasgos de la Comunicación Científica Responsable. De hecho, sus dimensiones facilitativas, inclusivas, emergentes o colectivas son tan vitales como la comunicación inteligente que activan. Pensar pues en la protección y el ensanchamiento de los derechos implica concentrar nuestros esfuerzos en estimular una investigación híbrida y que reflexione acerca de las dinámicas particulares que afectan a cada uno de los niveles de investigación y acción descritos en el capítulo. Es ahí cuando reforzaremos prácticas de intercambio igualitario que ayudarán a fortalecer los diálogos con nosotras mismas, nuestros equipos y otras organizaciones del entorno.



## Epilogue

With theoretical roots in *praxis*, a framework for political action committed to the emancipation of the oppressed, action research has attracted a range of adherents. These include members of the academy who wish to see their work more explicitly relevant to the social issues of the day, and consultants who recognize its strategic value in attempts at systemic transformation. As the book shows, this results in the proponents of action research being engaged in a broad range of social endeavour. At the core of this interest in action research is a desire for a more just and equitable global society.

From the perspective of the social constructionist paradigm, in which action research is located, social realities are assumed to be political phenomena, the ontology of which is largely dependent upon the interests of those inhabitants who have the most power. This assumption is what makes action research attractive to those of us who acknowledge the inter-subjective nature of social realities, and the role of power in their hegemony. However, this ontological assumption is also the main reason for resistance to action research within the academy. Interests and assumptions embedded in the traditional practices of universities underpin their resistance to the demystification of the political nature of the social realities in which they are embedded and which, lately, many obsequiously serve as stakeholders. Processes of demystification are, however, becoming significantly more difficult as abstract forms of power increasingly subsume agentic power. As Williams (1977: 110) describes, the hegemony of power elites is surreptitiously enhanced by,

a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living; our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values —constitutive and constituting— which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming.

In this way, hegemonic power is mystified and the political interests that underpin social realities become indiscernible. Embedded in everyday practices and vested in dominant ideological and cultural discourses, this form of power shapes the assumptions, routines and arrangements that underpin the experience of the status quo as natural and inevitable. In this way, the agentic power of those whose interests are subsumed and distorted by that reality, is secretly disarmed as the rules around “meaning and membership” —phenomena upon which members’ identity is constituted— are insidiously shaped.

The surreptitious influence of emerging forms of hegemonic power also has epistemological implications. In his conflation of power and knowledge, with knowledge theorized as an institutionalized and controlling system of thought, Foucault (1984) argued that the workings of hegemonic power are not only coercive (and repressive) but also productive, which means that any form of opposition will simply be subsumed by hegemonic discourses. This claim of the demise of agentic power coincides with the rise to global dominance of neo-liberalism over recent decades; an “ideological turn” that has centralized the power of global elites in mystified systemic forms that increasingly incorporate institutions (including universities) and organizations. Furthermore, new technologies—the ubiquity and insidiousness of which is further subsuming (and thereby debilitating) agentic power—are strengthening the influence of hegemonic forms of power. Jameson (1984:87) sees the ideological underpinnings of corporate capitalism, in association with the growth of information technology, as a system so totalizing that it makes the achievement of “critical distance” impossible, thus disarming any form of opposition to itself, so that,

... not only punctual and local countercultural forms of cultural resistance and guerrilla warfare, but also even overtly political interventions ... are all somehow secretly disarmed and reabsorbed by a system of which they themselves may well be considered a part, since they can achieve no distance from it.

This situation poses significant challenges for action researchers attempting to facilitate contextual awareness, particularly of the abstract forms of power that are insidiously shaping their and others’ apprehension of situations and circumstances. Thus, reference to “self-” and “other-awareness” needs to be extended to include the aspiration to develop awareness of the “deep political structure” of the human situation and associated endeavour. Powerful interests are vested in the mystified forms of social control that ensure the dominance of privileged elites across the planet; elites who appear to be blinkered by self-interest to the collective interests of humanity and to the precariousness of the human project on this planet. In this respect, the call voiced in this book to develop a “pedagogy of the privileged” is timely and could commence by addressing the perennial problem of the tragedy of the commons (see Hardin, 1968). As a health pandemic currently creates chaos, though nothing like the chaos that impending climate and environmental crises are likely to create, global power elites need to recognize that individual and sectarian interests are embedded in the collective human interest. The “privileged” need to become aware that if the human project on this planet fails, no human interests (neither those of the “privileged” nor those of the “oppressed”) will prevail.

With its democratic and humanitarian values underpinning its commitment to the collective interest, action research has the potential to facilitate the deep learning (single-, double-, and triple-loop learning) that the practice of critical collective reflexivity can engender. Its acknowledgement of the political basis of social realities is an important step towards their demystification, and its championing of practices that facilitate deep situational awareness through respectful confrontation [confrontation that is articulated as an act of caring (see Spicer *et al.*, 2009: 548)], intellectual humility, dialogue, and collaboration reflects an appropriate relational and communicational framework for insightful action. As this book indicates, the “wings” of this social movement are strengthening as it slowly but surely spreads its influence globally.

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No es solo el contenido académico lo que hace especial a este libro. Es la propia concepción de la investigación y su comunicación lo que le convierte en una obra que va mucho más allá de su especialidad: la investigación acción para el desarrollo territorial.

Esta obra colectiva, coordinada por la investigadora Miren Larrea, hace una apuesta decidida por modificar los patrones clásicos de la comunicación científica en absoluta consonancia con la naturaleza de la investigación que proponen sus autores. El libro incorpora distintos tipos de textos para recoger un diálogo entre investigadores y agentes implicados y favorecer así una escucha mutua. Pero además recurre al multilingüismo para que los autores comuniquen mejor lo que quieren comunicar y a quienes deben comunicárselo. Ambas opciones —diversidad de textos y multilingüismo— conectan mundos que deben estar ligados: investigadores y actores en lo territorial, lo local y lo internacional, el idioma con la investigación apegada al territorio y lo teórico con lo aplicado. De este modo, los autores velan porque la investigación permee y llegue a su destino natural, pero también porque crezca gracias al intercambio de conocimientos y experiencias que propician. A través de las formas de comunicación elegidas, se pone de manifiesto la necesidad de que la investigación social suceda no solo en el ámbito de lo académico y no solo en inglés.

Por eso tiene un valor singular, incluso para los no especialistas en este tema, que hay que agradecer a su editora, al conjunto de coautores y a la editorial.

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What makes this book special is not only its academic content; it is the very idea of research, and how it is communicated, which makes it go far beyond its specialty: Action Research for Territorial Development.

Edited by Miren Larrea, this volume is a collection of works firmly committed to changing the classic patterns of scientific communication that is in complete accordance with the nature of the research proposed by its authors. Different types of texts are brought together to stimulate mutual listening, through dialogue, between the researchers and agents involved. Moreover, it resorts to multilingualism so that the authors can transmit their message more effectively and reach the people it is intended for. Both features – text diversity and multilingualism – manage to connect worlds that are often apart but should be linked: researchers with actors in the territory, local issues with international ones, language with the research specifically developed for a territory, and theory with application. In this way, the authors can make sure their research permeates and reaches its natural destination and also that it grows thanks to the exchange of the knowledge and experiences it fosters. By choosing different means of communication, it has been made clear that there is a need for social research to take place in contexts other than the academic world, as well as in languages other than English.

That is why, even for non-specialists in the field, this publication has such outstanding value, and its editor, publisher and all the book's contributors deserve recognition for this undertaking.

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