

Repoliticising Participatory/Action Research: From Action Research to Activism: some considerations on the 7th Action Research Network of Americas Conference

Sandro de Castro Pitano, Rosa Elena Noal and Cheron Zanini Moretti

Abstract: The seventh conference of the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) took place in Montreal, Canada, from the 26th to 28th of June, in 2019. Having as title “Repoliticising Participatory/Action Research: From Action Research to Activism”, the event gathered people from different areas of practice coming mostly from the North American countries: Canada, United States and Mexico. The discussion presented here is based on notes made by the authors in the course of the conference, in which 40 words/keywords were identified, serving as a base to debate the validity of the principles of participatory research and action research in its repoliticisation and activism. Thus, we presented a systematisation of some key themes of the conference, among them, the commitment with the rupture: in relation to the traditional practices of research, the role and the social responsibility of the universities and the transforming character of participation, with emphasis in the effort for its repoliticisation and activism.

Keywords: ARNA (*Action Research Network of the Americas*); Participation; Action Research; Activism; Repoliticisation.

Repolitización de la investigación participativa/acción: de la investigación en acción al activismo: algunas consideraciones sobre la 7a Conferencia de la Red de Investigación Acción de las Américas

Resúmen: La séptima conferencia de la Red de Investigación Acción de las Américas (ARNA) se llevó a cabo en Montreal, Canadá, del 26 al 28 de junio de 2019. Con el título “Repolitizando la Investigación Acción Participativa: de la Investigación Acción al Activismo”, el evento reunió a personas de diferentes áreas provenientes en su mayoría de los países de América del Norte: Canadá, Estados Unidos y México. La discusión aquí presentada se basa en registros realizados por los autores en el transcurso de la conferencia, en los que se identificaron 40 palabras/conceptos, que sirven de base para debatir la vigencia de los principios de la investigación participativa y la investigación acción en su repolitización y activismo. Así, presentamos una sistematización de algunos temas clave de la jornada, entre ellos, el compromiso con la ruptura – en relación a las prácticas tradicionales de investigación, el rol y la responsabilidad social de las universidades y el carácter transformador de la participación, con énfasis en el esfuerzo por su repolitización y activismo.

Palabras-clave: ARNA (*Red de Investigación Acción de las Américas*); Participación; Investigación para la Acción; Activismo; Repolitización.

Introduction

The *Action Research Network of the Americas* (ARNA) presents itself as a network of university researchers who work with research and teaching in different contexts and levels. Among several initiatives, it aims at promoting the different research methodologies: in local, regional, national and international contexts, by supporting a democratic and sustainable society and disseminating critical knowledge in the Americas (ARNA, 2020). In this regard, recognising the multiple voices and experiences contained in complex realities in this continent, ARNA has as one of its goals the investigation of perspective diversity from its members in relation to the socio geopolitical challenges in the present time, through action/research and participatory research. (ARNA, 2020).

Since 2013, ARNA has held annual conferences aiming at the creation of bridges of solidarity in America and in the world, “while walls of intolerance are publicly displayed” (ARNA, 2020). Its seventh conference took place at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, from the 26th to the 28th of June, 2019. Having as title “Repoliticising Participatory/Action Research: From Action Research to Activism”, the event gathered people from different areas of practice coming mostly from the North American countries: Canada, United States and Mexico¹.

As participants of a Research Group² that has Popular Education and Participatory Action Research as theoretical and practical reference points, we seek to follow some discussion forums about these two fundamentals: locally, in our universities and through the relation that we established with popular movements; regionally, in the Studies Forum: works by Paulo Freire; nationally, in the Work Group 06: Popular Education in the National Association of Post-Graduation and Research in Education (Anped) and in the Freirean Network of Researchers (PUC-SP); and internationally, in the *Latin American Studies Association* (LASA) and in the *Action Research Network of the Americas* (ARNA) – the latter, an object of discussion on this article.

The discussion presented here is based on notes made by the authors in the course of the 7th Conference, and through these notes, around 40 categories/keywords were identified and served as base to the systematisation of some central themes from the referred event and to our analysis. Thus, we aim at presenting the validity of the principles of participatory research and research/action in its movement of repoliticisation and activism.

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- 1 On this occasion, we could observe a minority of participants deriving from South American countries, which in part, can be explained by the high cost required to an on-site participation (registration fee, plane tickets and accommodation); due to insufficient financial resources, on the part of teaching and research institutions for research communications in international scientific events; as well as for the limits imposed by the official languages of the event: French and English.
 - 2 In Brazil, we formed a network of researchers who originated from the Grupo de *Pesquisa Mediações Pedagógicas e Cidadania* (Pedagogical Mediations and Citizenship Research Group), sited at the Vale do Rio dos Sinos University (UNISINOS). From this group emerged: Popular education – Action and Research, linked to the *Universidade de Caxias do Sul* (UCS), led by Sandro de Castro Pitano; and, *Educação Popular, Metodologias Participativas e Estudos Decoloniais* (Popular Education, Participatory Methodologies and Decolonial Studies), linked to the Santa Cruz do Sul University (UNISC), led by Cheron Zanini Moretti.