Introduction – Participatory Research

This issue contains texts on participation and research in Latin America. Sometimes the emphasis is laid more on participation, sometimes on research, but both are always together. What unites all the texts is the assumption that the process of getting to know the world goes hand in hand with its transformation. In the articles we can see how a movement that stretches over a period of more than 50 years continues reinventing itself through new forms, and in other practices. We also see that without this experience of several decades one could hardly expect the development of participatory processes of the scale of the Participatory Budget. That is why this issue mixes the vision of current practices with attempts to reconstruct some of the sources and origins.

We welcomed the invitation to organize this special issue as a possibility of contributing, from Latin America, to the development of a research proposal that is already present in other continents, sometimes with different names and formats. We believe that the ready and generous cooperation of the authors is the gesture of the hand that stretches out to broaden the circle of participation and sharing. We feel less alone! The knowledge of sharing has the ability to be translated into solidarity.

Although we were not concerned with being strictly representative, the selected texts express important trends, movements and questions in the field of participatory research in Latin America. This is a research that moves between academia and social movements, and its protagonists can be a group of mothers in an urban periphery, or a government that wants to find another basis for managing the res publica. Through this work we hope to also contribute to bringing these countless practices of action research nearer to each other.
In the spirit of participatory research, this is not just a dialogue of authors who would like to meet other authors, since the individual authorship is inserted into a broad collective intellectual and social production. In this sense, the dialogue of forms of participatory research is also a dialogue between groups and peoples for whom the search for knowledge of themselves and of reality is part of the challenge of dreaming of, and making, a world in which there is room for all people.

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