

Call for abstracts, International Journal of Action Research (IJAR)

Special Issue: The dance of relationality and creativity in action research practice: an artful dialogue with person-centered practices

Introduction

It is increasingly recognized that accelerating transformations is a characteristic of contemporary societies. These shifts bring with them rising levels of complexity and unpredictability. Recent global disruptions – e.g. multiple crises of ecology, climate change, geopolitical changes, global conflicts and wars, as well as the Covid-19 pandemic, have all contributed to a sense of volatility and uncertainty and hinders or delays taking action. Crises demand us to rethink our value-orientations and how we conceptualize knowledge, professionalism, and social and organizational life. Such re-thinking invites us to notice how transformation moves through our everyday relations, and how ways of knowing and acting are continuously forming and reforming in response to one another. In workplaces as well as in leisure, we engage with each other and participate in social and organizational settings as whole persons, whose capacities also include creative, sensory, and artistic qualities.

Relationality and Creativity - embracing whole person research and transformation

So the focus of this special issue of *the IJAR* is on this transformative space we all now occupy, embracing volatility and disruption as opportunities for transformation through critical creative and artful practices that have the person in social situations as the primary focus. In doing so, we recognize the capacity for integrated approaches to knowledge production, sharing and transformation, that are aesthetic and person-centered. Such approaches to knowledge and expertise make explicit the formative, empathetic, caring, creative, experiential aspects as essential for re-empowering, re-professionalizing, re-sensitizing, and re-humanizing participation in social life, the natural world, and the environment.

Person-centeredness is rooted in a relational philosophy that focuses on the nature of actions and reactions that express and reinforce the relationship between actors in a powerful social system. These relations are not static connections but living movements of becoming, where persons and contexts co-shape one another. Paying attention to this ongoing movement brings sensitivity to the subtle processes through which transformation takes form. Person-centeredness embraces philosophical aspects of ethics, values, authenticity, and mutuality, emphasizing “ways of knowing, being, doing and becoming that are relational”. It implies a unifying principle that holds a person’s beliefs, values, hopes, dreams and desires as central considerations in why and how we collaborate and create room for participation and change. Person-centered practices do not privilege individual voice and well-being over collective voice and well-being or vice versa, as they both remain vital to a relational eco-system.

The conceptual and theoretical frameworks that are inclusive of personhood and that clearly articulate how these concepts are to be embedded in everyday practices at macro-, mezzo- and micro-levels (McCormack 2024) are traits that also relate to artfulness and artful agency

(Jensen 2022). Artfulness, in this sense, can be viewed as attunement to emergence; a way of staying with the unfolding patterns of relation that continuously create and recreate professional and everyday worlds. Artful agency is a mode of embodied, sensory, and relational engagement among groups of people and their spatial and material surroundings. In professional practices and leadership, artfulness is expressed in situations and moments shaped to facilitate connectedness and togetherness to the social and more-than-human environment (Skriver 2024). In such moments, participation itself becomes generative; the emphasis shifts from producing outcomes to cultivating the rhythms and relations through which new possibilities can arise. In artful action, creativity becomes a lever to individual and collaborative action, providing immanent critical perspectives on everyday practices, taken-for-granted worldviews, and habitual thinking, all needed when transformative change takes place (Jensen, in press).

Action research as an artful and person-centred practice

This call for papers asks whether artfulness and person-centredness may draw new paths and potential for action research in times of crisis both in society and workplaces. This question is based on the assumption that action research is the only methodology that can work across systems and local communities, precisely because it shares core values and/or principles with person-centeredness and artfulness: authenticity, contextuality, mutuality, relationality, sensitivity, creativity, and participants' right to have a voice in changing their own practices (Van Lieshout et al., 2021). Action research provides a bridge between personhood and place-based change, where local communities or professionals work creatively and artfully within ecological perspectives on knowledge, linking health of the planet, health of the earth with health of people and health of the workplaces/ workspaces. The participatory approaches of action research to value-based, place-based and co-created change resonate with person-centredness (McCormack et al 2024), and with co-creative and artful ways of building shared experience (Jensen 2022, Bradbury 2015) and sustainable transitions through the lifecourse. By working with person-centered principles, creatively and artfully, action research may contribute to cultivating practices where the relational space between persons becomes a source of transformation and contributes to a wider culture development.

Thus, the call plays with ways of integrating person-centredness with creativity and artfulness in action research theories, methodologies and practices, creating robust pathways to working with the experiences of fragmentation and alienation arising from global disruptions, and creating new visions and actions for a sustainable future. We call for contributions that cultivate artfulness and person-centeredness in action research as opening possibilities for humane, responsive, sensitive, and sustainable forms of social and work life, embracing human and post-human encounters and the unfolding processes through which such encounters transform us.

Therefore, we welcome extended abstracts that may problematize for instance:

- Potentials of the encounter between artfulness and person-centeredness in collaborative research and development.

- Person-centeredness as both a method, a philosophy, and an approach to co-produced knowledge.
- Place-based practices that are both generative and transformative whilst also having the potential to be scaled.
- Relational economic perspectives and the potential for maximizing human connection as a means of creating productive and caring communities.
- Partnerships between critical, creative and artful practitioners that present place-based solutions to seemingly intractable social issues/concerns.
- Action research using person-centredness and creative arts as guiding principles in enabling relationality and transformative practices.

Process:

Step	Deadline
Sending out call	November 2025
Submission of extended abstract*	April 15, 2026
Acceptance/rejection of extended abstract	June 15, 2026
Submission of full article**	January 15, 2027
Peer review process	January-June, 2027
Peer review sent to the authors	July 1, 2027
Final article submitted	November 15, 2027
Expected publication	April 15, 2028

* Extended abstract: maximum 1200 words (Format: extended summary, outlining headlines and sections for the content plus 3-5 theoretical references).

**Full article: maximum 7500 words (excl. abstract and keywords)

Proposals are submitted within deadlines to Professor Julie Borup Jensen at:

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Special issue editor team:

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- Famke van Lieshout, Associate professor, University of Utrecht, The Netherlands
- Jennifer Ann Skriver, Assistant professor, University College Absalon, Denmark

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