Alexandra Gheondea-Eladi[*]

REVITALIZATION AND ACTION RESEARCH

The revitalization of public spaces and buildings has evolved to be a process in which the community and the residents of an area are actively involved in the process of changing and developing spaces and buildings of interest. In this way revitalization of public spaces comes very close to the empowerment goals of action research. The following chapter pursues the similarities and contrasts between action research and of revitalization of public spaces. Several practices in revitalization projects are presented and analyzed. Then, the main theoretical and methodological aspects of action research are described and critically assessed with respect to its assumptions and risks. The third section proposes an analytical framework for comparing action research and revitalization projects and summarizes the main features of action research that may be considered for future revitalization projects.

What is revitalization?

Revitalization is not such a straightforward concept in the literature, as many authors could admit. In general, revitalization of public spaces is a part of urban planning which aims to adapt public spaces to the needs of the community. Involving the community in the process of change is a recent achievement in the terms of history, and the extent to which the community is actually realizing the urban development varies from one project to another. For example, Cortie and Dijst (1988, p. 229) link both economic and residential revitalization to economic growth, while social needs of the community are not part of the scene at all. For them, economic revitalization is achieved thanks to the investments in services and industry, while residential revitalization appears to be a consequence of economic revival (ibid.) and investments in historical, cultural and entertainment sites. In one account of revitalisation in Japan, revitalization is regarded only from an economic point of view (Seta 2008), while in another revitalization project (Adishakti 2008) in Indonesia, the community is involved only in order

---

[*]**Alexandra Gheondea-Eladi** – Ph.D. in Sociology, Romanian Academy; research interests: social theory, decision-making theory, volunteering, health decisions; e-mail: `alexandra.gheondea@googlemail.com`

to support the preservation of historical architecture, despite the fact that this architecture shows no resistance to earthquakes, thus revealing community participation without answering the local community needs for safety. It is only in later years and in some parts of the world that revitalization has been performed in relation to community-driven needs. Two revival projects from Minneapolis, in the United States of America (USA) have been analyzed with respect to the extent to which they enforce the state institutions' neo-liberal agenda upon the local communities (Elwood 2002, p. 121), thus pointing out more clearly the differences between what I would call revitalization that uses community participation and community-driven revitalization.

Seta (2008) describes one revitalization project conducted in the town of Toyama, Japan. The main problem faced by the city of Toyama and other Japanese cities is the decay of downtown, simultaneously with the development of suburban areas. The cultural and economic context in which revitalization is performed is characteristic to Japan, in the sense that the economic and local community are organized in various voluntary and non-profit organizations considered responsible for downtown-revitalization. However, revitalization in the study performed by Seta (ibid.) is regarded only from an economic point of view, while involvement of residents is limited to residents who own businesses in the town centre or those who are members of neighbourhood associations, local merchant's associations and the Chamber and the Society for Commerce and Industry. Participation of residents is mediated through these professional and local associations. The social needs of the community are not an issue in the revitalization process described in this paper, and neither are social inclusion, inequality[1] or building community relations through the sense of place[2]. In complete opposition to revitalization based on community driven needs, the paper of Seta concludes that "strong leadership with consensus among all entities in the downtown are necessary for planning and realizing effective strategies" (ibid., p. 180), thus suggesting that failure to revive downtown Toyama is amenable to lack of strength in leadership and a lack of consensus among community members.

On the other hand, Bradford (2013) describes two federal-government-projects for community revitalization performed between 2000 and 2005 and 2004-2006, respectively, in Canada, based on the concepts of "new localism" and "place-based policy making" (PBPM). PBPM is built on "engag[ing] local actor networks" in solving "wicked problems – entrenched, intercon-

---

[1] as is the case of Bradford (2013).
[2] as is the case of Billig (2005, p. 117).

nected and localized (. . .) across sectors and governments" (ibid., p. 158). The new localism accepts that "neighbourhood effects" originate in public policies, services and resources that are distributed in ways that underestimate certain neighbourhoods and support others. In order to solve such problems the new localism paradigm proposes that "experiential know-how of residents" and "professional technical advantage of governments" together with "street-level service providers' organizing opportunities" should work together (ibid., p. 158). The two projects described in Bradford's (2013) paper aim to tackle poverty and social exclusion through the main characteristics of PBPM, namely: incrementalism, interscalar links and learning from the local (ibid., p. 161). Incrementalism is based on "collecting experiences from small-scale, discrete pilot projects in selected neighbourhoods" (ibid., p. 161). Interscalar links refer to the manner in which small-scale experiences are scaled-up to national level policy. The mechanism which allows such generalization to take place is based on "systematic connections" between the two levels. At the same time, learning from the local should be based on "fine-grained qualitative knowledge of neighbourhoods, their community dynamics and individual and family pathways of connection" (ibid., p. 161).

In contrast to the revitalization work described by Seta (2008), in which the so-called systematic connections between different local communities and the local government policy are expected to be based on *consensus*, the Vancouver Agreement project described by Bradford (2013) managed to benefit from the *diversity* of opinions provided by the community. During the consultation period of the Vancouver Agreement (VA) the project has been discussed with the local community in 11 public meetings with about 200 attendees, in which it has been argued that "DTES [Downtown Eastside] residents possessed the local knowledge, community experience and skills to be partners in the VA and 'outside experts' must tap these resources and assist marginalized individuals to participate" (ibid., p. 164). This suggestion has been implemented by means of "task teams" which surveyed community needs and opportunities and proposed projects for evaluation to the Management and Policy Committee. On the other hand, another suggestion emerged during the public meetings with the local community, but it was not provided with an answer in the project implementation phase. The suggestion that the Vancouver Agreement should receive dedicated funding, was not met and the project began as an unfunded one in which "[t]hrough institutionalized dialogue, existing resources would be redirected around common priorities" (ibid., p. 165).

The second project described by Bradford (ibid., p. 168) was the Action

for Neighbourhood Change, "a two-year action-learning project [meant] to explore, test and articulate a resident-led approach to neighbourhood revitalization". The community involvement was mediated by trained "community animators [who] created network-based projects for language training, youth and immigrant women" (ibid., p. 171). In this way, revitalization was directed towards the social and communication needs of the community which were expected to influence also urban space revival.

The revival of public spaces can be influenced by many factors. Consequently, the term should be separated from related concepts used to reveal the different factors which are assumed to have an impact over them. Turala and Sikora-Fernandez (2014, p. 242) give a definition and taxonomy of urban transformations and differentiate between restructuring and redevelopment ("restructuring the urban space in its social and economic dimensions"), urban renewal ("replacing slums and other run-down buildings with new developments"), rehabilitation and regeneration ("restoring past greatness of buildings") and revitalization (a part of urban renewal, alongside renovation, modernization and revalorization which is meant to restore life and appeal of urban areas). For Turala and Sikora-Fernandez revitalization is a multi-dimensional process combining social, economic and spatial dimensions in response to a critical state of affairs in which the local actors act as agents of change, but in the absence of grand spatial modifications of the targeted site. Unlike the older perspectives presented by Cortie and Dijst (1988) economic, residential and communitarian revitalization go hand in hand.

However, as can be seen from the previous revitalization projects presented here, community involvement is not always a straight-forward activity with clear-cut methodology. This is why Elwood (2002) critically analyzes the extent to which either community needs at the grass-roots or government-lead policy agenda have been enforced in the Neighbourhood Revitalization Program (NRP) developed in the city of Minneapolis, USA in 64 out of 81 neighbourhoods over 20 years with funding available in two phases, amounting to $400 million. The paper argues that despite enforcing a neoliberal agenda upon participating communities, it also fostered the pursuit of goals that were not among the initial NRP objectives.

In contrast to the project described by Seta (2008) in which non-profit organizations and professional associations aimed to revitalize downtown by taking into consideration only economic interests, and to the one described by Bradford (2013), in which the local community's contribution was allowed to emerge only in the pilot test of the project, the project presented by Elwood (2002) used a set of practices which permitted the

initial policy objectives proposed top-down to be contested and improved in some local communities. Basically, for some communities, Phase 2 of the project included objectives which were derived from results of Phase 1. Not all neighbourhoods included in the project have produced "contest[ing] and re-thinking of revitalization through their NRP plans" (ibid., p. 128). Only neighbourhoods which were in "the most prosperous conditions" and those "facing the most severe problems" (ibid., p. 128) have deviated from the original objectives. On the other hand, only communities "whose neighbourhood organizations had the greatest stability and local political connections" (ibid., p. 128) contested the local state's agenda. Although it is not clear from this paper how "stability" and "political connections" have been measured, one of the most interesting un-intended results of the project has been that community members were "more informed about city procedures and services, and technical aspects of housing, transportation, economic development, policing, and a host of other issues and more prepared than ever to challenge the city's position" (ibid., p. 129). This conclusion was derived from the reaction of the communities to a scaling down of the NRP budget for the second phase, namely a "detailed and highly informed commentary on the financial, logistical and programmatic merits of several proposals for implementing phase two within the new funding constraints" described in local papers (ibid., p. 129). In other words, more than simply allowing the community to participate, the project empowered a part of the community by providing an understanding of the restrictions faced by public institutions, and thus granting the knowledge needed to improve them.

Action research

Action research emerged from two main critiques of current consultancy based on social research practices, both of them emerging from the inequality of power between the researcher and the researched. First consultancy research assumes that external entities may provide meaningful advice on internal practices. Secondly, practice is imposed on practitioners based on generalizations which may not reflect the characteristics of the organizations on which it is being imposed. Assuming that externals "know better" and that "what applies to most, applies to all" belong however to the old debates in the history of science. Nevertheless, on top of scientific debates, such criticism has also yielded an applied field of research, which will be presented in this section from a critical point of view.

Action research was first envisioned by the works of Dewey, Lewin, Collier and Moreno (Townsend 2014) and nowadays is applied in many forms (Bryman 2008), like participatory research, critical participatory action re-

search, practical action research, industrial action research, technical action research and many more (Kemmis et al. 2014). Kemmis et al. (ibid., p. 22) describe the differences between participatory research and social research and argue that in the former participation is aimed at overcoming unwanted consequences of practice, like "irrationality", "unsustainability" and "injustice". They oppose to critical participatory research the studies in which the objectivity of the researcher is presumed and in which the researcher is external to the practice field. From this point of view, the perspective proposed by them is similar to that of Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001, p. 8): "Action research is the study of a social situation carried out by those involved in that situation in order to improve both their practice and the quality of their understanding". However, the definition given by Winter and Munn-Giddings differentiates itself from critical action research as purported by Kemmis et al.(ibid., p. 14) in that the purpose of critical action research is not just "improving control over outcomes" (also called "technical action research") or "educating or enlightening practitioners" (also called "practical action research"), but mostly "*emancipating* people and groups from irrationality, unsustainability and injustice". Such emancipation is performed through a feed-back loop, in the tradition of Lewin, based on the cycle: plan, act, observe, reflect, re-plan, act, etc.

Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001, p. 8) actually deny the role of professional social scientists if they are external to the organization: "we do not need to be dependent on outside experts on social science theory and methodology in order to be able to formulate issues or to determine appropriate methods" (Kemmis et al. 2014). While it is understandable why external researchers are not always desirable agents of change, it appears that the unstated implication of Winter and Munn-Giddings' assertion is *that practitioners, on top of being professionals in their own field should also become professionals in research.* Kemmis et al. agree that the support of "consultants and collaborators can and do provide real and valuable support to participant researchers" (ibid., p. 9), still they are also vulnerable to the dangers of projecting their own self-interests upon the research and consequently upon the research participants. It is, indeed, a natural propensity of people engaged in group decision-making to project their own views upon the others (Stanovich, West 2000, p. 645). However, the interests of participants at all levels of an organizational hierarchy are not always convergent and so, practitioners engaged in action research, themselves, incur the same dangers as external researchers, in general. It seems clear that both Winter and Munn-Giddings (2001) and Kemmis et al. (2014) *look at practitioners at all levels of an organization as a homogeneous group both from the point*

of view of their interests and from the point of view of their power relations:

> "[f]or action research, hierarchies of power and status (between academic and practical knowledge, between researchers and practitioners, between professionals and their clients, between experts and laypersons) are seen as inhibiting and impoverishing the creation and distribution of knowledge" (Winter, Munn-Giddings 2001, p. 8).

> "we believe that insiders have special advantages when it comes to doing research in their own sites and to investigating practices that hold their work and live together in those sites – the practices that are *enmeshed* with those sites" (Kemmis et al. 2014, p. 5).

It is not clear whether insiders are always free to change their own practices without the support of hierarchical superiors and of their hierarchical superiors, and so on, who may or may not have different interests than practitioners. Especially in some organizational cultures, change is seen as the responsibility of superiors. Employees who engage in change incur the risk of losing their job or being deterred in their efforts. In such cases, external consultants act as mediators between two levels of power, namely, the practitioners and their superiors.

Townsend (2014) describes the different problems between research conducted by practitioners aimed at improving their own practices and the research conducted by research professionals aimed at obtaining generalizable principles that are applicable in practice. The first one is the creation of a hierarchy between the two types of research in which practitioner-led research is subordinate to professional-researcher-led studies. The second problem described by Townsend is based on the argument of Schön (1991) which shows that external researchers cannot comprehend the intricacies of practice from their ivy tower. I would argue, however, *that neither an ivy tower perspective, nor an internal perspective will offer the necessary and sufficient information needed to decide upon the best practices, in any conditions.* It is only through the corroboration of both reference points that a clear and accurate perspective can be obtained.

More than this, it is said that the privilege of participatory research is to create the conditions in which participants "speak a shared language" (Kemmis et. al 2014, p. 5). In the project presented by Bradford the community participated in discussions and a part of the issues raised in these discussions have been addressed, while others did not. Nevertheless, this type of participation did not lead to the type of contestation described by Elwood (2002). A shared language is not a guarantee of shared meaning.

Although recurrent meetings and discussions are necessary to reach shared meanings, they are not sufficient in order to achieve it. Some form of feed-back and efficiency of communication between different levels of power is required, such as the two phases employed by the project described by Elwood (ibid.).

Another issue emphasized by Townsend (2014) is that in action research the notion of "practice" is not particularly well defined. Thus, he investigates the way in which practitioners of action research describe the link between research and practice. Results reveal that participants evoke being informed and feeling empowered. Empowerment for Townsend's (ibid., p. 16) participants means:

- a chance to "have a say about what is important";

- a chance to do things that are considered important;

- a chance to change things that do not seem important.

However, there is no mention of how it is possible to differentiate empowerment from the Hawthorne effect or the observer effect according to which participants who feel observed and monitored may simply perform their tasks better (Mayo 1945).

On the other hand, contrary to some of the principles of action research, participants in this study revealed the desire to have their endeavours "more widely used". In some sense this means imposing onto others the practices that have been found useful in one area or in one setting. Some of this natural desire could be explained by psychological results revealing the fact that outcomes that have been obtained or produced by ones own effort will be valued higher than outcomes obtained by others (Ariely 2011). Townsend (2014) , himself states that further research should be carried out with respect to the transferability of action research results. Still, in this way, action researchers fall into the same problems of generalizability of qualitative research incurred usually by external researchers (Gheondea-Eladi 2014, p. 114; Polit, Beck 2010, p. 1451; Shadish et al. 2002).

A unifying framework for revitalization and action research

In the first part of this chapter, revitalization of public spaces has evolved to use local community participation and certain types of practice in order to place public spaces in use again. From the second part, action research appears to be a paradigm based on the empowerment of actors involved in the practice of a certain field. However, in general, while community

participation may lead to the empowerment of the local community (Speer et al. 2013, p. 103), not all projects that involve participation lead to empowerment (Rogers et al. 2007, p. 785). In this section I will show that empowerment and the practice of participation are the common grounds based on which revitalization and action research can come together. The following paragraphs will give a brief overview of these two terms such that in the concluding part, the unifying analytical framework based on these two concepts can be applied to inform both revitalization and action research.

Despite the fact that there is a growing literature on empowerment and its meaning (Lemire 2013, p. 167; Perkins, Zimmerman 1995, p. 569; Yehuda 1998, Yeh-Yun Lin 1998, p. 223), the nature of practice is not as much the focus of analysis (Townsend 2014, Kemmis et al. 2014, Schwandt 2014, p. 231; Perkins, Zimmerman 1995). Empowerment appears in a variety of disciplines, from health (Lemire 2013, Koelen, Lindstrom 2005, p. 10) to organizations and management (Bowen, Lawler 1992, p. 31; Greasley et al. 2008, p. 39) to social problems (Kyem 2001, p. 5; Jennings 2011, p. 63), education (Limerick, Burgess-Limerick 1992, p. 19) and sexuality and gender (Peterson 2010, p. 307). Despite having at least as much applicability as empowerment, practice is usually taken for granted (Guillemin et al. 2010, p. 21; Onwuegbuzie, Leech 2009, p. 881) while being an issue only for action researchers (Schwandt 2014, Kemmis et al. 2014) and theoreticians (Scheer 2012, p. 193). Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (Hornby 1989, p. 972) differentiates between *practicing on something* which means "doing something repeatedly or regularly in order to improve one's skill" and *practice* which means "making something part of one's behaviour by doing it regularly". The same dictionary defines the verb *to empower* as "to give lawful power or authority to somebody to act". Departing from these basic meanings, various research has nuanced the two terms and has also provided connections and links between them.

Kemmis et al. (2014, p. 51) observe that "critical participatory action research (...), aims at changing people's practices, their understanding of their practices, and the conditions under which their practices are carried out". They go on to examine the main characteristics of practice, namely "meaning and purpose", "structure", "situated[ness]", temporality, institutionalization, reflexivity and practicality (ibid., pp. 51-52). Therefore, for them, practice, means: *doing for this purpose, in this situation and at this time, in a way that can be repeated by others, reflected upon and improved.* Nevertheless, for Kemmis et al. practice is not only "doing", but also "saying and relating" that is guided by "practice architectures" without conditioning them (ibid., p. 55).

On the other hand, for Schwandt (2014, p. 233), practice is to theory what application is to generalization. He points out that knowing what caused an event and acting upon it are two very different issues which "demand two different kinds of knowledge". Also, he distinguishes practice from habit by arguing that practice is informed by necessary and sufficient knowledge, while habit requires only some knowledge. Consequently, the crucial step from knowing to doing is informed by the answer to the question: "what should I do now given this evidence" (ibid., p. 235).

Townsend (2014, p. 16) explores the relationship between practice and research by looking at action researchers' accounts of their own work. In doing so he draws the link between practice and empowerment by defining the latter as "a chance to have a say about what is important" in ones activity (practice), a chance to do things that one thinks are important for the practice and a chance to change things that do not seem important in the practice. This is connected to the main characteristics of individual-level practice proposed by Scheer (2012, pp. 209-216) which entails: (1) "mobilization" of body resources for the repeated exercise of "habits, rituals and everyday pastimes" and "doings, and sayings"; (2) naming experiences and expressions of feelings in socially accepted and constructed ways; (3) communicating emotions "as means of exchange"; (4) "regulating and learning emotions". These two perspectives are actually saying that, *empowerment is power over one's practice.*

However, looking at empowerment from the point of view described by Townsend can be summarized in the terms used by Peterson (2010, p. 308) as "power to [do something]", as opposed to "power over [someone]". Peterson (ibid.) also points out that the scientific literature reveals uncertainty as to which of the two reflect better the concept of empowerment. On the other hand, Perkins and Zimmerman (1995) remind the readers of the special issue on empowerment of the American Journal of Community Psychology about the possibility to see empowerment as eliciting the persons' *capacity and skills* sustained by a pro-active mental state considered "healthy". Nevertheless, they also warn about the fact that aspirations to increase control may not lead to increases in quality of life in all circumstances. Laverack (2006, p. 113) points out yet another aspect of empowerment which is likely to lead to trouble: the fact that empowerment needs to emerge from cooperation between the powerful and the weak. This idea is only possible if one assumes that "the boundaries of power are neither natural nor inevitable, but are merely political mechanisms, which could be arranged in other ways" and if there is a "belief that change can occur" (Dworski-Riggs, Langhout Day 2010, p. 215).

Conclusions

Revitalization may lead to several degrees of community participation, it can be informed to different extents by community needs and it may lead to a certain degree to empowerment, but not necessarily and not in all cases. As the sequence of projects presented in the first section reveals, success[3] generally depends on how the practice of revitalization is structured in order to encourage community involvement (as in the case of Seta (2008) or Adishakti (2008)), community participation (as in the case of Bradford (2013)) or community-driven revitalization (as in the case of Elwood (2002)).

Action research departed from the desire to handle existing power relations, but it inevitably disregards power relations that develop among practitioners themselves, at different levels of an organization. It also strives to balance the view of external researchers by opposing to it the internal view of the practitioner. However it is not based on a direct collaboration between the two. Thirdly it aims to foster participation of the local community, but it depends on how the practice of participation is performed and structured. It also aims to empower practitioners to influence their own practices, but risks falling into the traps set by generalization and transferability of practice. Nevertheless, in all these aspects, action research is revealed as pertaining to two of the aspects discussed for revitalization: empowerment and practice.

In light of the unifying framework where empowerment and practice have been described, revitalization and action research have two important aspects to learn from each other:

- action researchers may consider the collaboration between external researchers and internal practitioners, as it has been advocated by practitioners in revitalization projects;

- revitalization studies may consider the experience of participation practice available in action research projects, as this may prove effective in passing from revitalization based on community involvement to the one *driven* by the community.

---

[3]Defined as the achievement of revitalization which does not simply involve or consult with the local community, but is also driven by an interest in identifying and answering their needs with respect to the revival of the public space.

Literature

ADISHAKTI L. J. (2008), Community Empowerment Program on the Revitalization of Kotagede Heritage District, Indonesia Post Earthquake, [in:] Vulnerable Cities: Realities, Innovations and Strategies SE, eds. Tetsuo Kidokoro et al., p. 8, Springer Japan 2008, `http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-4-431-78149-3\_12` [access: 9.11.2015].

ARIELY D. (2011), Raţionalitatea Benefică (The Upside of Irrationality: The Unexpected Benefits of Defying Logic at Word and at Home), Publica.

BILLIG M. (2005), Sense of Place in the Neighborhood, in Locations of Urban Revitalization, "GeoJournal", Vol. 64, Issue 2, pp. 117-130, `http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10708-005-4094-z` [access: 9.11.2015].

BOWEN D. E., LAWLER E. E. (1992), The Empowerment of Service Workers: What, Why, How, and When – ProQuest Central – ProQuest, "Sloan Management Review", No. 33(3), `http://search.proquest.com/pqcentral/docview/224962868/fulltextPDF/47B8D5ED8474772PQ/28?accountid=15533` [access: 9.11.2015].

BRADFORD N. (2013), Neighbourhood Revitalization in Canada: Towards Place-Based Policy Solutions, [in:] Neighbourhood Effects or Neighbourhood Based Problems?, (eds.) D. Manley et al., SE – 8, Springer Netherlands, `http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-6695-2\_8` [access: 9.11.2015].

BRYMAN A. (2008), Social Research Methods (2nd edn.), Oxford University Press, Oxford.

CORTIE C., DIJST M. (1988), Science on the Move: The Importance of the University of Amsterdam with Regard to Economic and Residential Revitalization of Amsterdam, "Netherlands Journal of Housing and Environment", No. 3(3), pp. 229-239.

DWORSKI-RIGGS D., LANGHOUT DAY R. (2010), Elucidating the Power in Empowerment and the Participation in Participatory Action Research: A Story About Research Team and Elementary School Change – ProQuest, "American Journal of Community Psychology", June 45(3-4), p. 215 `http://search.proquest.com/docview/375351752/fulltextPDF/912CD4F4A4454AC8PQ/4?accountid=15533` [access: 9.11.2015].

ELWOOD S. (2002), Neighborhood Revitalization through "Collaboration": Assessing the Implications of Neoliberal Urban Policy at the Grassroots, "GeoJournal", No. 58, p. 121.

GHEONDEA-ELADI A. (2014), Is Qualitative Research Generalizable?, "Journal of Community Positive Practices", XIV(3), pp. 114-124,

```
http://jppc.ro/?page=descriere\&lang=ro\&numar=JCPPNr.32014\
&articol=ISQUALITATIVERESEARCHGENERALIZABLE?\#articol
```
[access: 9.11.2015].

GREASLEY K., ET AL. (2008), Understanding Empowerment from an Employee Perspective: What Does It Mean and Do They Want It? – ProQuest Central – ProQuest, "Team Performance Management", Vo. 14, No .1/2, pp. 39-55, `http://search.proquest.com/pqcentral/docview/217105842/fulltextPDF/47B8D5ED8474772PQ/17?accountid=15533` [access: 9.11.2015].

GUILLEMIN M., ET AL. (2010), Resources Employed by Health Researchers to Ensure Ethical Research Practice, "Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics: An International Journal", Vol. 5, Issue 2, p. 21, `http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/jer.2010.5.2.21` [access: 9.11.2015].

HORNBY A. S. (1989), 'Practice', Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (4th edn, Oxford University Press), p. 972.

JENNINGS J. (2011), The Empowerment Zone in Boston, Massachusetts 2000-2009: Lessons Learned for Neighborhood Revitalization, "The Review of Black Political Economy", Vol. 38, Issue 1, pp. 63-81, `http://search.proquest.com/pqcentral/docview/852245538/fulltextPDF/492263FF2EB48B5PQ/1?accountid=15533` [access: 9.11.2015].

KEMMIS S., MCTAGGART R., NIXON R. (2014), The Action Research Planner. Doing Participatory Action Research, Springer.

KOELEN M., LINDSTROM B. (2005), Making Healthy Choices Easy Choices: The Role of Empowerment – ProQuest Central – ProQuest, "European Journal of Clinical Nutrition", 59 Suppl 1, p. 10, `http://search.proquest.com/pqcentral/docview/219662221/fulltextPDF/47B8D5ED8474772PQ/38?accountid=15533` [access: 9.11.2015].

KYEM P. A. (2001), Power, Participation, and Inflexible Institutions: An Examination of the Challenges to Community Empowerment in Participatory GIS Applications – ProQuest, "Cartographica", 38(3-4):5-17 November 2001, `http://search.proquest.com/docview/89065614/fulltext/EB0EB8CEEE2E477FPQ/42?accountid=15533` [access: 9.11.2015].

LAVERACK G. (2006), Improving Health Outcomes through Community Empowerment: A Review of the Literature – ProQuest, "Journal of Health, Population and Nutrition", 24(1), p. 113, `http://search.proquest.com/docview/202992704/fulltextPDF/912CD4F4A4454AC8PQ/11?accountid=15533` [access: 9.11.2015].

Lemire M. (2010), What Can Be Expected of Information and Communication Technologies in Terms of Patient Empowerment in Health? – ProQuest Central – ProQuest, "Journal of Health Organization", 24(2), pp. 167-181, http://search.proquest.com/pqcentral/docview/312270077/fulltextPDF/47B8D5ED8474772PQ/20?accountid=15533 [access: 9.11.2015].

Limerick B., Burgess-Limerick T. (1992), Volunteering and Empowerment in Secondary Schools, "Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly", Vol. 21, Issue 1, p. 19 http://nvs.sagepub.com/cgi/doi/10.1177/089976409202100103 [access: 3.02.2014].

Mayo E. (1945), The Human Problems of Industrial Civilization. (4th edn, Macmillan 1945), https://archive.org/stream/socialproblemsof00mayo/socialproblemsof00mayo_djvu.txt [access: 9.11.2015].

Onwuegbuzie A. J., Leech N. L. (2009), Generalization Practices in Qualitative Research: A Mixed Methods Case Study, "Quality and Quantity", 44: 881.

Perkins D. D., Zimmerman M. A. (1995), Empowerment Theory, Research, and Application – ProQuest, "American Journal of Community Psychology", Vol. 23, No. 5, p. 569, http://search.proquest.com/docview/205342892/fulltextPDF/912CD4F4A4454AC8PQ/13?accountid=15533 [access: 9.11.2015].

Peterson Z. D. (2010), What Is Sexual Empowerment? A Multidimensional and Process-Oriented Approach to Adolescent Girls' Sexual Empowerment – ProQuest Central – ProQuest, "Sex Roles", No. 62: 307, http://search.proquest.com/pqcentral/docview/225362722/fulltextPDF/47B8D5ED8474772PQ/3?accountid=15533 [access: 9.11.2015].

Polit D. F., Beck C. T. (2010), Generalization in Quantitative and Qualitative Research: Myths and Strategies, "International Journal for Nursing Studies", November 47(11), pp.1451-1458.

Rogers S. E., et al. (2007), Effects of Participation in Consumer-Operated Service Programs on Both Personal and Organizationally Mediated Empowerment: Results of Multisite Study – ProQuest, "Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development", Vo. 44, No. 6, pp. 785-800. http://search.proquest.com/docview/215284976/fulltextPDF/912CD4F4A4454AC8PQ/16?accountid=15533 [access: 9.11.2015].

Scheer M. (2012), Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieusian Approach to Understanding Emotion, "History and Theory", No. 51, pp. 193-220.

Schön D. A. (1991), The Reflective Practitioner, Ashgate Publishing Ltd.

Schwandt T. A. (2014), On the Mutually Informing Relationship between Practice and Theory in Evaluation, "American Journal of Evaluation", 35(2), pp. 231-236.

Seta F. (2008), Activities of Local Organizations for Downtown Revitalization in Regional Cities, [in:] Tetsuo Kidokoro et al. (eds), Sustainable City Regions: SE" – 9, Vol. 7, (Springer Japan 2008) `http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-4-431-78147-9\_9` [access: 9.11.2015].

Shadish W. R., Cook T. D., Campbell D. T. (2002), Purposive Sampling and Generalized Causal Inference. Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs for Generalized Causal Inference, Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

Speer P. W., et al. (2013), The Influence of Participation, Gender and Organizational Sense of Community on Psychological Empowerment: The Moderating Effects of Income – ProQuest, "American Journal of Community Psychology", Vol. 51, Issue 1, pp. 103-113, `http://search.proquest.com/docview/1286931514/fulltextPDF/912CD4F4A4454AC8PQ/8?accountid=15533` [access: 9.11.2015].

Stanovich K. E., West R. F. (2000), Individual Differences in Reasoning: Implications for the Rationality Debate?, "The Behavioral and Brain Sciences", No. 23, pp. 645-726, `http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11301544` [access: 9.11.2015].

Townsend A. (2014), Weaving the Threads of Practice and Research, [in] Promoting Change through Action Research, eds. F. Rauch et al. (eds), Sense Publishers.

Turala M., Sikora-Fernandez D. (2014), Urban Renewal in Warsaw's Commercial Real Estate Market, [in] European Metropolitan Commercial Real Estate Markets SE , (eds.) F. Nozeman and Arno J. Van der Vlist, – 9 (Springer Berlin Heidelberg), `http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-37852-2\_9` [access: 9.11.2015].

Winter R., Munn-Giddings C. (2001), A Handbook for Action Research in Health and Social Care, Routledge.

Yehuda B. (1998), Applying Empowerment: Organizational Model – ProQuest Central – ProQuest, "Career Development International", 13, `http://search.proquest.com/pqcentral/docview/219369403/fulltext/47B8D5ED8474772PQ/22?accountid=15533` [access: 9.11.2015].

Yeh-Yun Lin C. (1998), The Essence of Empowerment: A Conceptual Model and a Case Illustration – ProQuest Central – ProQuest, "Journal of Applied Management Studies", 7, p. 223, `http:`

`//search.proquest.com/pqcentral/docview/213724076/fulltextPDF/`
`47B8D5ED8474772PQ/26?accountid=15533` [access: 9.11.2015].

Alexandra Gheondea-Eladi

REVITALIZATION AND ACTION RESEARCH

Keywords: revitalization, participation, empowerment, practice, action research.

The revitalization of public spaces and buildings has evolved to be a process in which the community and the residents of an area are actively involved in the process of changing and developing spaces and buildings of interest. In this way revitalization of public spaces comes very close to the empowerment goals of action research. The following paper pursues the similarities and contrasts between action research and revitalization of public spaces. Several practices in revitalization projects are presented and analyzed. Then, the main theoretical and methodological aspects of action research are described and critically assessed with respect to its assumptions and risks. The third section proposes an analytical framework for comparing action research and revitalization projects and summarizes the main features of action research that may be considered for future revitalization projects.