Action Research for Sustainability
Being a Green Activist-Researcher

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Why does the field of Sustainability need Action Research?

What is Action Research?

Examples of Action Research for Sustainability

Challenges for Sustainable Action Researchers
No, no - WE just write about the world...
YOU GUYS have to go out and save the bloody thing!
“for knowledge [in support of decision making for sustainable development] to be truly useful it generally needs to be “coproduced” through close collaboration between scholars and practitioners” (Clark & Dickson, 2003, p. 8059)

“sustainability challenges require new ways of knowledge production and decision-making. One key aspect of sustainability science, therefore, is the involvement of actors from outside academia into the research process in order to integrate the best available knowledge, reconcile values and preferences, as well as create ownership for problems and solution options.” (Lang et al., 2012, p. 25)

“sustainability science research must be created through processes of co-production in which scholars and stakeholders interact to define important questions, relevant evidence, and convincing forms of argument. The pertinent actions are not ordered linearly in the familiar sequence of scientific inquiry, where action lies outside the research domain. Rather, these are combined in entangled patterns relating to the problem to be tackled and the practical constraints of inquiry.” (Kates et al., 2000, p. 2)

“users of knowledge are needed to transform knowledge claims into trustworthy, socially-robust, usable knowledge” (Kates et al., 2000, p. 3)
Action Research is...

a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It 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 to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.

(Heron & Reason, 2001, p. 1)
What’s the problem?

Was our understanding of the problem accurate?
Was our method to solve it effective?

How do we solve it?

Take action to solve the problem!
(Coghlan & Brannick, 2005)
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It is important not to regard this (Action Research spiral) as a rigid prescription of how things will turn out. It is idealised. Sometimes events do follow this sequence... Often, however, things do not turn out as we hope. Making sense of what happens when things do not go according to plan is just as much part of an action enquiry as when they do. The research is in the action, whether the action goes as we hope or not. The learning is in the practice.

It is also important to remember that, presented like this, elements of the model above appear as unproblematic. They can, however, be highly problematic. For example, ‘identifying an aspect we want to improve’ can be a very complex process. Sometimes we are not clear what it is we are trying to improve, or why.

(McNiff & Whitehead, 2002, p. 71)
Welcome to the Farming Concrete Barn, where you can store the data you collect with the Farming Concrete Data Collection Toolkit, developed by the Design Trust for Public Space in collaboration with Farming Concrete.

If you are a gardener and would like to start entering data, please log in first. If you don't yet have a login, you can create one now. If you are just visiting, we will eventually have some public reports here for you to view.

If you have any problems or questions, please email us at gardens (at) farmingconcrete (dot) org.
## Overview

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>286</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>76,090</td>
<td>4,483</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gardens Recording Data</td>
<td>Cities Recording Data</td>
<td>Pounds of Food Harvested</td>
<td>Pounds of Compost</td>
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...and counting!
USING HUMAN URINE AS FERTILIZER
Challenges...

What counts as an ‘action’?

How much control do you allow the research participants to have over the project?

Ethics

Incorporating *intergenerational* justice into Action Research

Bias and objectivity

Academic timescales VS Action Research timescales
REFERENCES


• Videos:
  – How to Measure the Environmental Impact of Your Farm or Garden: https://vimeo.com/135215615
  – Human Urine as Fertilizer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KhrMQHNCYs
  – Map Me Happy - Participatory Mapping: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQynTomBAQs
FURTHER READING


• Videos:

  – The citizen science revolution | Leesa Ricci | TEDxSUU: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W8zVkJVs49Y