How to do Action Research for Transformations

At a Time of Eco-Social Crisis

How to Research Guides

Hilary Bradbury, PhD., Curator, AR+ Action Research Plus Foundation, International

Capturing years of innovation within contemporary action research, Hilary Bradbury highlights where action research for transformations (ART) is directed: towards responding to climate change and achieving global sustainability goals. Paying particular attention to social justice, the book brings together the human and social sciences, exploring the impact action research can make.

‘Bradbury’s alternative approach to knowledge-creation invites educators and change leaders to combine leadership, collaboration and “a social laboratory of action” for finding creative local solutions with global ripple effects to construct a sustainable future. Visualizing how brilliant visionary ideas are connected to grounded practical steps, readers committed to a transformational participatory worldview leave the book inspired, but most importantly, knowing exactly how to do this work.’
– Sonia M. Ospina, New York University, US

‘For anyone involved in transformational processes for a more sustainable world – whatever your role might be, whatever scale you are operating on or whatever the context is – this book is a must and one of a kind. We get rich, reflexive, practical as well as philosophical perspectives on the key components of ART, Action Research for Transformation. The many voices, experiences and stories combined with easy-to-understand practices will help you advance the never-ending learning journey to become a better ARTist. This is also a book that you will return to repeatedly for continuous inspiration and learning; a vast resource to bring with you in whatever transformational initiatives you are involved in.’
– Svante Lifvergren, MD., Ph.D., Development Director, Skaraborg hospital group and Affiliated Lecturer, Chalmers University of Technology, Sweden

‘This book builds on Hilary Bradbury’s years of scholarship and practice as an action researcher with an expertise in organisational development, and a particular interest in sustainable development. Action Research for Transformations is a form of action research that is evolving in response to the eco-social crises that we face. Using an innovative model which integrates relational, conceptual and experimental spaces, she develops a values-based approach to social learning which creates a bridge between community and university, action research and sustainability. This is a must-read book for any person who is wishing to learn how to integrate personal development with positive social change for the benefit of self and society.’
– Joan Walton, York St John University, UK

‘Long an expert curator of crucial handbooks, here we meet more of Bradbury herself, micropractices that can move quickly into intermediate and macro spaces of transformation. Highly relevant to planners, both citizen and professional, Bradbury offers a scaffolding to push us beyond personal, political or disciplinary biases and generate relational spaces genuinely receptive to diversity. A good read, in addition to seriously enhancing our repertoire of how to foster transformations for just sustainabilities in our sadly divided world.’
– Lake Sagaris, Pontificia Universidad Católica, Chile

‘Hilary Bradbury has made many important contributions to the field of action research over some decades. Yet, I found this book to be her most interesting piece of writing. It is experimental in form and successfully mixes stories of real-world change processes, with auto-

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biographical reflection and conceptual analysis in a way which really made me think. The book is an erudite and passionate articulation of pathways to action at a time when the world urgently needs to nurture the “proliferating micro worlds” that she describes.

– Danny Burns, Institute of Development Studies, The University of Sussex, UK

‘Mother Earth is burning, drowning, and asphyxiating. Action Research for social Transformation (ART) usefully steps into this planetary peril. ART is knowledge as social practice that rouses us from our sleepwalking and offers grassroots solutions to the environmental crisis. Bradbury shares examples of transformative work in communities including the “cocinas convergentes” (Convergent kitchens) in Medellin, Colombia; the International Development ARTists in Asia and America working to transform local cultures; and the ARTists at the USC Center for Sustainable Cities in partnership with the port of Los Angeles tackling pollution implicated in childhood asthma to name a few. For anyone concerned about the prospect for life on earth, this book is a must-read.’

– Nathalis Wamba, Queens College, City University of New York, US

‘In facing the global environmental crises, the publication of this book is very timely. Action research transformation (ART) provides us with an alternative research strategy to explore multiple methods and create practical knowledge of how to respond to the various problems caused by global capitalism. I highly appreciate Hilary's work which will spearhead the new direction of action research globally and create positive transformations in different parts of the world.’

– Benjamin H.B. Ku, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, China

‘We are learning that the activation of a generative social field is held by a sense of shared aspiration — or as Hilary Bradbury puts it in this book, by a sense of “developmental friendship.” It’s a partnership and a friendship that is not to be confused with socializing. That is precisely why this book matters so much. It tells us why the integration of these things is so important: methods and tools, practice fields, and generative holding spaces. It helps us to broaden and deepen the movement of change makers that use Action Research for Transformation (ART) to evolve our systems and ourselves as needed by the challenges we face. This book is core reading. It’s core reading for those of us who are reimagining and reshaping the 21st-century university by integrating science, art, consciousness, and the praxis of transforming our systems and ourselves. It’s core reading for those of us working to develop the practical foundations for such a globally distributed new university — the u.school for transformation — that links the reinvention of higher ed with the regeneration of our economic, democratic, and cultural systems and practices.’

– Otto Scharmer, MIT, Presencing Institute, US

‘With keen interest I have followed Hilary Bradbury’s work on action research for over twenty years. Action Research Transformation (ART) forms a new chapter. While pragmatic in its aims, its socio-political values — for sustainability conjoined with social justice — are center stage. Conceptually informed and context sensitive, ART is distinguished in its specific focus on action for a sustainable world. The practice of ART is a call to global consciousness of the imperative for collaborative action. My dearest hope is that the present work moves us toward this end.’

– Kenneth J. Gergen, The Taos Institute, US

‘Our circumstances are a multilayered contradiction which include stepping beyond good-bad polarities. You — we are all such paradoxes. You’ll find referenced in How to do Action Research Transformations conceptual frames which make sense of our contemporary disorientation. How to do Action Research Transformations offers radical, more manageable, assistance to evolve our capacities at this time of eco-social meta-crisis.’

– Simon Divecha, formerly of Greenpeace

‘The practice of ART, a form of increasingly popular social science, is also community learning. It explicitly links personal development and sustainable development. It lessens the wall between academia and community leadership. It gets our universities re-involved with the reason they exist, namely, to serve society. I see in ART the opportunity and challenge to develop in spaces between communities and university settings, involving many more developmentally flourishing people and community. And so I add my encouragement — more ART, more ARTists please.’

– Tomas Björkman, Ekskäret Foundation, Sweden