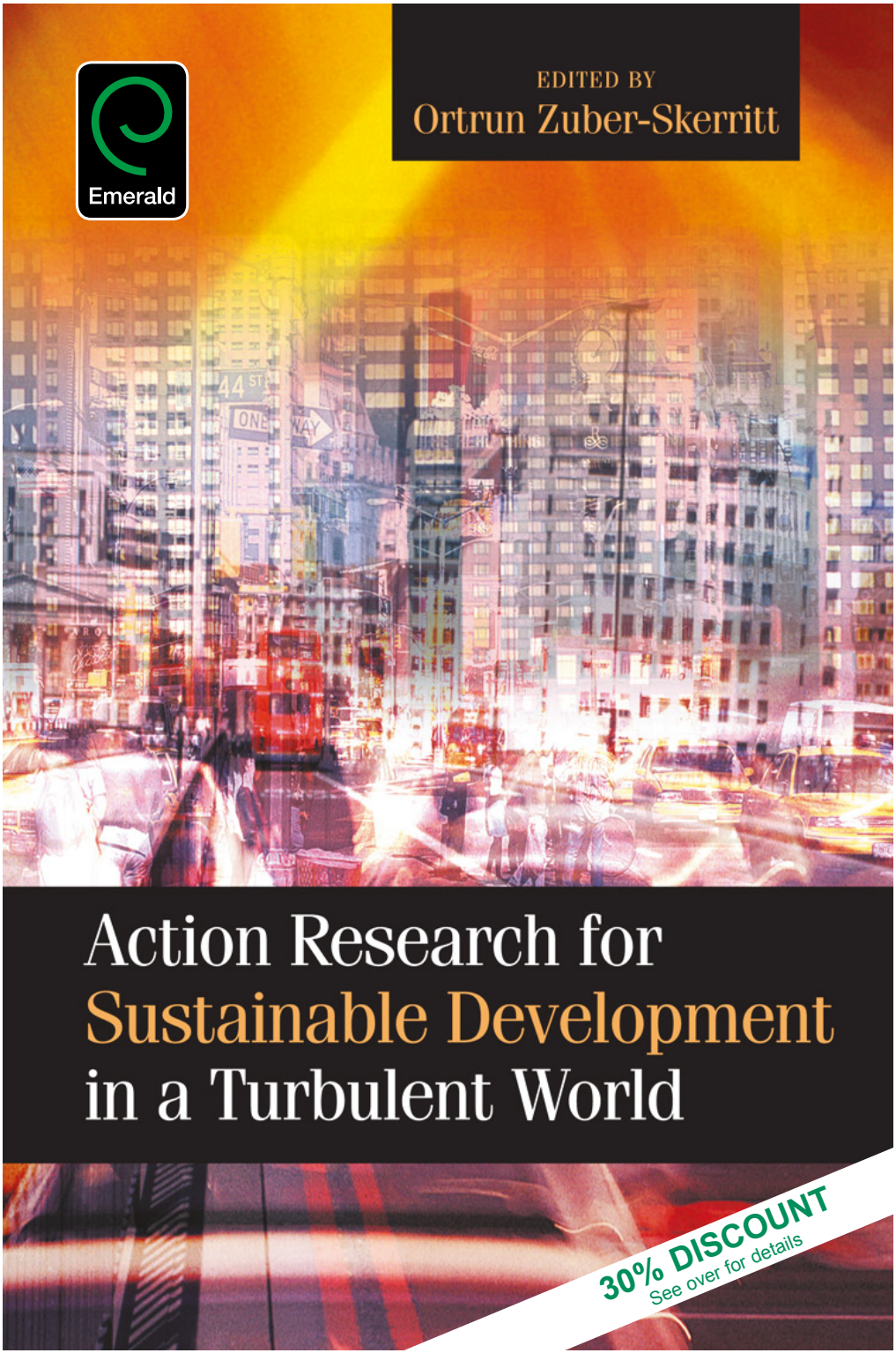
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Action Research for
Sustainable Development
in a Turbulent World
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Education

Action Research for Sustainable Development in a Turbulent World

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Synopsis

This book presents and celebrates over 20 years of Action Learning and Action Research (ALAR) through stories, experiences, reflections and specific works of key proponents and participants in Action Learning and Action Research World Congresses. Authors discuss wide-ranging possibilities and argue for the benefits of action research for sustainable development and problem solving in a turbulent world in the twenty-first century. They practise what they preach: collaborative, participatory action research based on learning outcomes from projects, discussion and debate. All chapters argue for, justify and explain the need for a shift in approaches to learning and development – from technical, managerial and controlling, to emancipatory, critical, ethical and humanist approaches – to achieve sustainable and robust outcomes in a turbulent world. The book is the first to present action research as a solution to and integration of economic, social, philosophical and ecological systems for problem solving and sustainable development in this troubled world of the twenty-first century.

Reviews

"Action Research has come of age with this highly topical, well written, diverse book, led and edited by Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt….. This book reminds us of the importance of the values that underpin what we develop, how we innovate, and how we solve problems. Offering expert-led routes to action research in practice, it offers many practical examples of ways to engage effectively with contemporary cutting-edge issues. We learn here how action research and sustainability fit hand in glove, especially in the contemporary world where we face the need for engaged, thorough, ongoing management of informed change to address unprecedented turbulence."

Gina Wisker, PhD, Professor of Higher Education and Contemporary Literature, Head of Centre for Learning and Teaching, University of Brighton, UK

"This is a wonderful and I think quite unique contribution to the literature. I love how it unpacks the complex (and I use the word in Richard Bawden's sense) interplay of key constructs and characteristics that comprise what the editor and authors usefully identify as PALAR. As a practitioner with some level of AR literacy, I still often struggle to explain the distinctive contribution made by this way of conceptualizing and acting in the world. As I read this book, I was able to see the patterns and linkages between my own experiences and what the various authors reflect on, conceptually and experientially, in these chapters. The result is a sense that I may be better able to engage and work with others, who often look to facilitators such as ourselves to explain why we should do things a little differently."

Phil Crane, PhD, Senior Lecturer, Social Work and Human Services, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

About the Authors

Richard Bawden is a Fellow and Director of the Systemic Development Institute, a Professor Emeritus from the University of Western Sydney, and an Adjunct Professor and retired Visiting Distinguished University Professor of Michigan State University.

Rosalind Beadle from the Centre for Health and Society at the University of Melbourne is a PhD student supervised/mentored by Ernie Stringer. She has supported developmental projects in the remote Western Australian Ngaanyatjarra community of Warburton since August 2010.

Saul Brown is a business consultant, coach, writer and teacher. Saul is an Adjunct Lecturer in the School of Management at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) where he designed and teaches the MBA subject "Developing Executive Leadership", for which he was recently recognized for his teaching excellence.

Bob Dick is an independent scholar. He is also an Adjunct Professor at Southern Cross University, Lismore, Australia. He has published widely and makes his work accessible online, including his course on "Action Research and Evaluation Online".

Judith Kearney is a member of the Griffith Institute for Educational Research, and teaches within the Faculty of Education. Since 2006, Judith has explored ways to enhance educational opportunities for children from Pacific migrant families in Southeast Queensland.

Robin McTaggart is Adjunct Professor in the School of Education at James Cook University, Townsville, Australia. He spent 20 years working at Deakin University with Stephen Kemmis on action research. During that time he completed a PhD at the University of Illinois with Robert Stake.

Ron Passfield is Professor of Management at the Australian Institute of Business in Adelaide – he is a foundation member of ALARPM and was President from 2002 to 2007. He was a co-founder and Editor of the *ALAR Journal* and actively involved in the development, conduct and evaluation of four World Congresses on Action Learning and Action Research.

Eileen Piggot-Irvine (FNZEAS, FNZPLC) is Professor of Leadership at Royal Roads University, Victoria BC, Canada. Previously she was Associate Professor and Director of the New Zealand Action Research and Review Centre at Unitec in Auckland and formerly Director of the New Zealand Principal and Leadership Centre.

Shankar Sankaran is an Associate Professor of Project Management at the School of the Built Environment at the University of Technology Sydney and a Core Member of the Centre for Management and Organization Studies. He is also a Distinguished Fellow of the Action Research Centre at the University of Cincinnati. Shankar has been actively involved in promoting action research in the Asia Pacific Region.

Ernie Stringer is Adjunct Associate Professor in Aboriginal Studies and Health at Curtin University of Technology, Perth, Australia. He is author of the texts: *Action Research* (2007); *Action Research in Education* (2008), *Action Research in Health* (with Bill Genat, 2004); *Action Research in Human Services* (with Rosalie Dwyer, 2005); and *Integrating Teaching, Learning and Action Research* (2010). He is a member of the editorial board of the *Action Research* journal and Past President of the Action Learning and Action Research Association (ALARA).

Jack Whitehead is Adjunct Professor in the Faculty of Education of Liverpool Hope University, Liverpool, UK; a Visiting Professor at Ningxia Teachers University in China; and a Visiting Fellow at the University of Bath, Bath, UK. He is a former President of the British Educational Research Association and a Distinguished Scholar in Residence at Westminster College University.

Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt is Director of OZI (Ortrun Zuber International P/L), specializing in action learning and action research, leadership development programs, postgraduate research training and supervision, including qualitative research methods. She is also Adjunct Professor at Griffith University (Brisbane, Australia); Professor Extraordinaire at Tshwane University of Technology (Pretoria, South Africa); and Regional President Australasia, Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL).

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Highlights

In today's "turbulent" world, overpopulation, climate change, intensity of natural disasters, peak oil, nuclear energy concerns, and other issues that raise concern about the future of humankind on earth, have projected "sustainability" into common conversation. Awareness has been heightened that achieving outcomes is one thing, and sustainability – capacity to keep up the outcome – is quite another and is even more important, certainly for continued wellbeing.

Each chapter explains in detail how sustainability can be achieved through:

- Facilitative action leadership and more flexible approaches to addressing "wicked" problems in an uncertain and complex world (Chapter 2).
- A systemic perspective and the phenomenon of "emergence" in organizational systems (Chapter 3).
- A global epistemological transformation of what counts as educational knowledge, with a focus on improving practice and generating "living theories" of our own learning, the learning of others, and community and organizational learning at work (Chapter 4).
- Deepening levels of authentic collaboration – a central feature of effectiveness and sustainability (Chapter 5).
- New perspectives and more comprehensive approaches to sustainable social justice (Chapter 6).
- Action research as an enabler of integrative thinking for sustainable innovation, learning and development in business (Chapter 7).
- Self-directed learning and community development from "inside out" with a cascade effect into other communities (Chapters 8 and 9)
- Action research strategies for sustainable development in public sector organizations (Chapter 10).
- A new model of action research for sustainable development in a turbulent world through collaborative action learning, participatory action research and democratic action leadership required for individuals, groups and whole organizations/communities (Chapter 11).

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