Action research as a practice-based practice

Stephen Kemmis

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Action research as a practice-based practice

Stephen Kemmis*

School of Education, Wagga Wagga, NSW, Australia

Action research changes people's practices, their understandings of their practices, and the conditions under which they practice. It changes people's patterns of 'saying', 'doing' and 'relating' to form new patterns – new ways of life. It is a meta-practice: a practice that changes other practices. It transforms the sayings, doings and relating that compose those other practices. Action research is also a practice, composed of sayings, doing and relating. Different kinds of action research – technical, practical and critical – are composed in different patterns of saying, doing and relating, as different ways of life. This paper suggests that 'Education for Sustainability', as an educational movement within the worldwide social movement responding to global warming, may be a paradigm example of critical action research.

Keywords: praxis; practice architecture; action research; sustainability

Introduction

Action research aims at changing three things: practitioners' *practices*, their *understandings* of their practices, and the *conditions* in which they practise. These three things – practices, how we understand them, and the conditions that shape them – are inevitably and incessantly bound together with each other. The bonds between them are not permanent, however; on the contrary, they are unstable and volatile. Neither practice nor understandings nor the conditions of practice is the foundation in this *ménage*. Each shapes the others in an endless dance in which each asserts itself, attempting to take the lead, and each reacts to the others.

Action research can be a kind of music for this dance – a more or less systematic, more or less disciplined process that animates and urges change in practices, understandings and the conditions of practice. Action research is a critical and *self*-critical process aimed at animating these transformations through individual and collective self-transformation: transformation of our practices, transformation of the way we understand our practices, and transformation of the conditions that enable and constrain our practice. Transforming our practices means transforming what we *do*; transforming our understandings means transforming what we *think* and *say*; and transforming the conditions of practice means transforming the ways we *relate* to others and to things and circumstances around us. I will speak about these three things as '*sayings*', '*doings*' and '*relatings*'. Each – sayings, doings and relatings – is irreducible to the others, but always in an endless dance with the others. Each provokes and responds to changes in the posture, tempo and direction of the others' movements.

*Email: bconlan@csu.edu.au

But if action research is the music for this dance, it is also a music that someone has to play. Playing the music is also a practice – a particular kind of *doing*. It is also to be understood – understood in terms of particular kinds of *thinking* and *saying*. It also involves relationships with others and with the circumstances that shape practices – so it involves particular kinds of *relating*. Action research has its own diverse and changing sayings and doings and relatings. And, crucially, action research aims to be among the circumstances that shape other practices – practices of education or social work or nursing or medicine, for example. Action research aims to be, and for better or for worse it always is, a *practice-changing practice*. Better because it sometimes helps make better practices of education, social work, nursing or medicine; worse because it may have consequences that are unsustainable for practitioners of these practices or for the other people involved in them – students or clients or patients, for example.

Sayings, doings and relatings

I began by asserting that action research aims to change practices, people's understandings of their practices, and the conditions under which they practice. This is a form of the definition of action research Robin McTaggart and I framed long ago in our *Action research planner* (Kemmis and McTaggart 1986), now out of print (we are currently working on a revised and enlarged edition). Part of the logic that caused us to identify these three as the principal things to be changed through action research came from our reading of Jürgen Habermas's theory of knowledge-constitutive interests in which he identified three principal media in which social life is structured: *language*, *work* and *power*. These were the underpinnings for our emphases on understandings as expressed in language, practices as expressed in work, and situations and circumstances or the conditions of practice as expressed in relationships of power.

Since that time, and especially in the past few years, this formulation of understandings, practices and conditions of practice seems more fortuitous than we understood at the time. I have been reading some new forms of practice theory that give redoubled importance to these ideas. For example, US philosopher of practice Theodore Schatzki (1996, 2002), writing from a Wittgensteinian perspective, speaks of 'sayings' and 'doings' in relation to social practices. And French historian of Hellenistic and Roman philosophy Pierre Hadot speaks of all three.

In his book *Philosophy as a way of life*, Hadot (1995) argued that the aim of the ancient philosopher was to live properly and well. Philosophers seek wisdom (etymologically, *philo-sophia* is the love of wisdom). They seek wisdom in order to live a 'philosophical' life. Hadot refers to the ancient distinction between three parts of philosophy – *dialectic* or *logic*, *physics*, and *ethics*. These were regarded as separate only for pedagogical purposes – to help people learn what it means to live a 'philosophical' life. In ancient times, philosophical or theoretical discourse, *in itself* or *for its own sake*, was not the point. What *was* (and still is) the point is *how we live* – living 'philosophically'. As Hadot says:

> … philosophy itself – that is, the philosophical way of life – is no longer a theory divided into these parts, but a unitary act, which consists in living logic, physics, and ethics. In this case, we no longer study logical theory – that is, the theory of speaking and thinking well – we simply think and speak well. We no longer engage in theory about the physical

world, but we contemplate the cosmos. We no longer theorize about moral action, but we act in a correct and just way (1995, 267; original emphasis)

The point of the 'philosophical life' is not theorising about saying, doing and relating – logic, physics and ethics – but actually saying, doing and relating in ways that are wise and prudent, and informed by theoretical knowledge made available in traditions of thought and traditions of living. The philosophical life is a particular way of living – following one or other of the general outlines of the form of life advocated by Platonists, the Aristotelians, the Stoics or the Epicureans. Hadot's analysis of texts from the third century BC to the second century AD convinces him that the 'philosophical' life was not and is not a matter of philosophical discourse or theory; it was and is a matter of practice. For a professional practitioner in any field today – like education, social work, nursing or medicine – to live a 'philosophical life' is a matter of

(1) *living* a 'logic' by thinking and speaking well and clearly, avoiding irrationality and falsehood;
(2) *living* a 'physics' by acting well in the world, avoiding harm, waste and excess; and
(3) *living* an 'ethics' by relating well to others, avoiding injustice and exclusion.

These three come together in a unitary *praxis* – that is, morally committed action oriented and informed by traditions of thought. This *praxis* comes together and coheres in a way of life, a way of orienting oneself in any and all of the uncertain situations we encounter. To live this life is not just a matter of instrumental behaviour aimed at achieving external ends or satisfactions. As Joseph Dunne (1993, 130) remarks in relation to being an 'experienced person', *praxis* is always as much a process of self-formation as it is a matter of achieving an external goal or satisfaction:

There is a 'reversal of consciousness' in the process of experience in that new experiences (if they are really new and not simply repetitions of 'old' ones) not only give us access to a new reality but also involve us amending and reshaping our previous apprehensions of reality. And the experience of recurrently carrying through this reversal (i.e. the experience of experience itself) leads to a deepened self-awareness or self-presence in the truly experienced person; in becoming experienced, he has been involved not only in acquiring information but also, through this very acquiring, in a process of self-formation.

The coherence of a unitary *praxis* that comes together in a way of life holds logic, physics and ethics together – holds saying, doing and relating together – so that each informs the other. In a 'philosophical' kind of action research, then, neither understandings nor practices nor the conditions that shape practices – sayings, doings and relatings – is logically prior to either of the others. They emerge and develop in relation to one another. Understandings may form intentions, but practice does not simply enact intentions – the doing is always something more than and different from what was intended. Nor does practice alone form understandings – thinking and saying are also discursively formed, in the common stream of a shared language used by interlocutors who stand in some particular kind of relationship with one another. Nor are the conditions that shape practices entirely created by this or that person's understandings or practices – they are formed through larger, longer collective histories of thought and action.

Understandings, practices and the conditions of practice shape and are shaped by each other; as Schatzki (2002, 71) put it, they are 'bundled' together. In Schatzki's view, in the case of routinised or specialised or professional practice, sayings, doings and relatings 'hang together' (2002, 77; described also by the notion of '*Zusammenhang*', Schatzki 2002, 5 and 18) in comprehensible ways, in characteristic *teleoaffective structures* as projects with characteristic purposes, invoking characteristic emotions. And they often unfold in accordance with general *rules* about how things should be done. Schatzki believes that practices are 'densely interwoven mats' (2002, 87) of sayings and doings (and relatings) in which people encounter one another in generally *comprehensible ways*. For this reason – because practices are enacted in dense interactions between people in sayings, doings and relatings – Schatzki describes practice as 'the site of the social'.

Practice architectures

In a new book (Kemmis and Smith 2008), 10 colleagues and I explore the idea that an individual person's *praxis* is shaped and formed by 'practice architectures' that constitute *mediating preconditions* for practice:

(1) *cultural–discursive* preconditions, which shape and give content to the 'thinking' and 'saying' that orient and justify practices;
(2) *material–economic* preconditions, which shape and give content to the 'doing' of the practice; and
(3) *social–political* preconditions, which shape and give content to the 'relatings' involved in the practice.

These practice architectures are the densely interwoven patterns of saying, doing and relating that enable and constrain each new interaction, giving familiar practices their characteristic shapes. Schatzki (2002, 98) describes practices as 'prefigured' because social interaction in established practices generally follows these familiar shapes or patterns. For example, what education *means* (thinking, saying) to a teacher is always already shaped by ideas that pre-exist in various discourses of education; how education is *done* (doing) is always already shaped by the material and economic resources made available for the task; and how people will *relate* to one another in educational settings and situations (relating) is always already shaped by previously established patterns of social relationships and power.

While already prefigured in these ways, however, each new episode of a practice makes possible new understandings that may re-shape the discourses in which it is oriented and conducted; each new episode makes possible new activities that may re-shape the material and economic conditions that enable and constrain the practice; and each new episode makes possible new ways of relating that may re-shape the previously established patterns of relationship between the different people and kinds of people involved. In such ways, the sayings and doings and relatings that compose practices are restlessly made and re-made in and through practice in each particular time and place, by these particular participants, so practices and practitioners and the conditions of practice are transformed as well as reproduced from occasion to occasion.

The transformation of practices involves transformations in how people understand their practices, what they do, and how they relate to one another in the practice.

Sayings, doings and relatings can each be transformed, but each is always transformed in relation to the others. For example, transforming a particular kind of educational practice (doing) – like the shift from whole-class teaching to project work for individual students – might mean making a paradigm-shift from a conservative view of education as transmission of knowledge, skills and values to a liberal view of education as self-formation (shifts in thinking and saying and in ways of relating as well as changes in the ways of doing things). Or shifting from project work by individual students to school–community projects might mean making a shift from the liberal view to a critical view of education as cultural, social and economic transformation for individuals and societies. There are parallels in other fields like social work, nursing and medicine: making the paradigm-shift from a conservative view of transformation as improving service delivery to a liberal client-centred view, or to a critical view of practice in these fields as both shaped by and shaping the cultural–discursive, social–political and material–economic arrangements in a community or society. In each case, changing the practices – what is done – will be accompanied by changes in how the doing is thought about, talked about and justified. And the shifts of sayings and doings will also involve shifts in the ways people relate to each other in the practice, and in the arrangements of things and resources required to do the new practice.

So we can see that changing our practices, our understandings of our practices, and the conditions under which our practices are carried out requires changing the sayings, doings and relatings that compose our practices. If we hope the change will be sustained, we will need our sayings, doings and relatings to cohere – to form coherent patterns that 'hang together', as Schatzki suggested. Under such conditions, he says (following Wittgenstein 1957), we know 'how to go on' in a practice – how to continue action and interaction within the practice. To say that sayings, doings and relatings 'hang together' does not necessarily mean that they cohere entirely without contradiction or confusion in the saying, clumsiness in the doing, or conflict in the ways of relatings – these flaws may be part of a practice, and only become apparent after a long time, when longer term consequences emerge, and in the light of critical reflection – for example, through action research.

Action research as a meta-practice

As already suggested, action research is itself a practice – a practice-changing practice. Kemmis and Grootenboer (2008) described practices that shape other practices as 'meta-practices'. Action research might thus be thought of as a meta-practice.

Theorists and practitioners

Some educational research – although usually not action research – seems to want to change educational practitioners' practices so they will conform to educational theorists' theories about how practice should be conducted.

This view of the role of educational research forgets or ignores that theorists' theories are formed by their (the theorists') practices (e.g. their practices of reading and research), and that practitioners' practices are oriented and informed by their (the practitioners') theories (whether dignified by the name of theories or are simply the categories in which the practitioners interpret their world) (see Table 1).

Table 1.   Theorists' theories and practitioners' practices.

	Theories	Practices
Theorists'	✗	
Practitioners'		✗

    Action research treats theorists as practitioners and practitioners as theorists (see Table 2). It is interested not so much in closing the alleged 'gap' between theory and practice, but in closing the gap between the *roles* of theorist and practitioner.

    But it is not just educational theorists' and practitioners' *theories and practices of education* (or social work or nursing or medicine) that are involved in this nested set of relationships. The theorists and practitioners involved are also oriented in practices of research or action research by their *theories of research* or action research. The nested set of relationships is thus a little more complex (see Table 3).

    It is an open question whether these different theories and practices cohere with one another, for educational theorists or educational practitioners or both, in relation to education or (action) research or both. Do they see research or action research as an educative process like other educational processes, for example? Or, for example, do they see education as, in some sense, a process of research – as John Dewey (1916) appeared to do? And how far does participation in education or the research process stretch – to include only theorists or teachers, or also their students and others affected by the education and research processes?

    As I say, these are open questions, to be answered by exploring different cases.

    In action research, however, the attempt is not to bring practitioners' practices into conformity with (external) theorists' theories, but to have practitioners be theorists and researchers – to give practitioners intellectual and moral control over their practice. Their action research, as a practice-changing practice, is a self-reflective process by which they remake their practice for themselves. And, as noted earlier, this process is a process of *self-transformation* – not just changing sayings, doings and relatings as externalities, but the sayings, doings and relatings that compose one's own life – that give one's life meaning, substance and value.

Saying, doing and relating in action research

As a practice, action research happens in sayings, doings and relatings – both in the conduct of the action research itself and in the justification of action research. The

Table 2.   Relationships between the theories and practices of theorists and practitioners.

	Theories	Practices
Theorists'	✓	✓
Practitioners'	✓	✓

Table 3.   Theorists' and practitioners' theories and practices of education and (action) research.

	Theories		Practices	
Theorists'	of education	of (action) research	of education	of (action) research
Practitioners'	of education	of (action) research	of education	of (action) research

justification of action research – discourse or theorising about it – might seem to involve mostly *thinking* and *saying* things about action research, but it also involves *doing* (e.g. practices of researching and reading and writing about it), and *relating* (e.g. relationships between speakers and hearers, authors and readers, as well as those involved in projects or the theorising and those who observing the debates about it).

Different kinds of action research involve different characteristic patterns of sayings, doings and relatings. Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) describe a number of broad types of action research, including participatory research, critical action research, classroom action research, action learning, action science, soft systems approaches and industrial action research. These different types of action research differ in the kinds of problems and issues they typically address, the kinds of settings in which they occur, and the kinds of people involved (e.g. problems and issues, settings and people in industry, organisations, communities, or schools and classrooms).

Beyond these differences, however, there are also differences in the general purposes different kinds of action research projects serve. Carr and Kemmis (1986) distinguished three kinds of action research based on Habermas's (1972, 1974) theory of knowledge-constitutive interests: *technical* action research guided by an interest in improving control over outcomes; *practical* action research guided by an interest in educating or enlightening practitioners so they can act more wisely and prudently; and *critical* action research guided by an interest in emancipating people and groups from irrationality, injustice and harm or suffering. In Schatzki's (2002) terms, these three kinds of action research differ in their 'teleoaffective structure' – that is, their overall structure and purpose as 'projects' for the people involved (their '*telos*' or overarching purpose), which may also include different kinds of emotional investments and states (the affective element). Technical action research, practical action research and critical action research involve very different kinds of constellations of sayings, doings and relatings.

Technical action research

In technical action research, the participant-researcher aims to improve the *outcomes* of her or his practice. The practice is regarded as a means to an end, capable of being improved to be more effective or efficient in producing known ends – improved test scores for students in a class, or improved health outcomes as a result of a doctor's medical consultations, for example. The end is known (improved test scores or health outcomes); the task for the participant-researcher is to improve the means – her or his own practice. This may involve changing the way others are involved in the practice – the way students work, or the way patients administer their medications, for example – but the focus of attention remains on the practitioner herself or himself. The others involved are treated in the *third person*, one might say – as the objects of the practitioner's action rather than as persons who are as much subjects in the process as the practitioner. In such a case, the practitioner's sayings, doings and relatings to others and to objects in the setting are directed towards the practitioner herself or himself. The practitioner is the one who decides what is to be done, what is to be changed, and what sense is to be made of the observations made. In technical action research, there is an intransitive, one-way relationship between the participant-researcher and the others involved in or affected by the research.

Practical action research

In practical action research, there is a sense in which the 'project' is also self-directed, but in this case the others involved also have a voice. The practitioner aims *to act more wisely and prudently*, so the outcomes and longer-term consequences of the practice will be for the best. Such a stance requires treating the others involved not as objects but as subjects capable of speech and action, and as persons who will also live with the consequences of what is done. The practitioner thus addresses them in the *second person* (as 'you') – as an Other who is also a subject or self (like oneself). In practical action research, not just the means of the practice are objects of change and development; the ends are also in question – the practitioner explores the outcomes and longer-term consequences of the practice to discover the kinds of criteria by which the practice should be evaluated – for example, to take into account parents' views about students' experiences as well as the views of the students, or the impact of health treatments on patients' families or communities as well as the impact on the patients themselves. The practitioner in such a case might still be the one who decides what is to be explored and what changes are to be made, but in practical action research she or he remains open to the views and responses of others, and the consequences that these others experience as a result of the practice. In this case, there is a transitive, reciprocal relationship between the practitioner and others involved in and affected by the practice.

Critical action research

In critical action research, this transitivity is amplified still further. The research is undertaken collectively, by people acting together in the *first-person* (*plural*) as 'we' or 'us'. Decisions about what to explore and what to change are taken collectively. In this case, however, people explore their patterns of sayings, doings and relatings as socially constructed formations that may need to be transformed as a whole. They would require transformation if the character, conduct or consequences of the practices involved were found to be *unsustainable* in any of five ways:

(1) *Discursively unsustainable*: incomprehensible or irrational, relying upon false, misleading or contradictory ideas or discourses.
(2) *Morally and socially unsustainable*: excluding people in ways that corrode social harmony or social integration; unjust because it is oppressive in the sense that it unreasonably limits or constrains self-expression and self-development for those involved or affected, or dominating in the sense that it unreasonably limits or constrains self-determination for those involved or affected (Young 1990).
(3) *Ecologically and materially unsustainable*: ecologically, physically and materially infeasible or impractical, consuming physical or natural resources unsustainably.
(4) *Economically unsustainable*: too costly; costs outweigh benefits; transferring costs or benefits too greatly to one group at the (illegitimate) expense of others; creating economic disadvantage or hardship.
(5) *Personally unsustainable*: causing harm or suffering; unreasonably 'using up' the people's knowledge, capacities, identity, self-understanding, bodily integrity, esteem, privacy, resources, energy or time.

These different faces of unsustainability are 'built into' some of the practice architectures that shape our lives, enabling and constraining our collective possibilities for *praxis* – for morally committed action, oriented and informed by traditions of thought and action. The structures and practices of schooling, for example, sometimes include ways of thinking and saying that are irrational, ways of doing that are unproductive or harmful, or ways of relating that cause or maintain suffering, exclusion or injustice. The student who suffers bullying in a school, the student whose life experience is not recognised by a sexist curriculum, the student who is indoctrinated into irrational beliefs, the student whose life opportunities are diminished by forms of teaching that serve the interests of particular groups at the expense of others' interests – all endure consequences wrought by practice architectures that are flawed and in need of reconstruction.

In critical action research, the aim is to explore social realities in order to discover whether social or educational practices have such unsustainable consequences. It does so by opening communicative space (Kemmis and McTaggart 2005) in which people can reflect together on the character, conduct and consequences of their practices. What is to be transformed in critical action research is not only *activities* and their immediate *outcomes* (as in technical action research) or the *persons* and *(self-) understandings* of the practitioners and others involved in and affected by a practice (as in the case in practical action research) but the *social formation* in which the practice occurs – the discourses (sayings) that orient and inform it, the things that are done (doings), and the patterns of social relationships between those involved and affected (relatings). Thinking of these social formations as 'practice architectures' allows us to think of them as *made* by people, and thus as changeable by people. People involved in critical action research aim to change their social world collectively, by thinking about it differently, acting differently, and relating to one another differently – by constructing other architectures to enable and constrain their practice in ways that are more sustainable, less unsustainable.

Critical action research is not as esoteric as it may sound. Indeed, I believe it is becoming more widespread every day, not because people are consciously taking it up as 'research' or as a 'social-scientific methodology', but because there is a more urgent need than ever before to understand the consequences of human activity and social practice.

'Education for Sustainability': a model of critical action research?

I am currently conducting a study of 10 'Education for Sustainability' initiatives in the region of Australia where I live – the Riverina region in south-western New South Wales. These initiatives, some in primary and secondary schools, some in vocational education and training settings, one in a university, and some in informal community education settings, are aimed at addressing various threats to the planet – the greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warming; waste of energy, water and other non-renewable resources; and threats to biodiversity. The people involved in these projects are acting to address these threats in various different ways, although all of them involve processes of education and self-education that they hope will lead to transformations of the world starting with self-transformation of the people involved – teachers, students, students' families, communities.

These initiatives seem to me to exemplify critical action research. They change the way people think about and talk about their world (sayings), they change the way they

act in and on it (doings), and they change the ways they relate to others and to the environment (relatings). While participants in the first cases my research team studied have all learned from others' experiences, they are all also learning from their own collective experience – at first hand, in the first person. One of the things that is striking about these cases is that they involve place-based education – a very strong sense of being in a place and being a co-inhabitant of that place with other people and other species and other resources local to that place. Equally striking is the fact that in all these cases there is a strong sense of the relationship between this particular place, located in space and time, and the larger world and history of which this place is a part. Each of the initiatives invokes the 'contemplation of the cosmos' Pierre Hadot spoke of in the excerpt I quoted earlier.

I think participants in none of the initiatives describe their work as action research of any kind – technical, practical or critical – although some propose to use action research to evaluate their efforts – but I would nevertheless describe their work as critical action research. They learn by doing; they collect data about their efforts; they consciously and self-consciously, critically and self-critically transform their ways of thinking, doing and relating in the world. They are exploring and reconstructing the practice architectures that construct their lives.

Participants in these 'Education for Sustainability' initiatives have come to *think differently* about the world and their place in it. Planet Earth is not a cornucopia of infinitely-available resources – participants understand the world in languages of ecological footprints, of 'food-miles', of sustainable agriculture, of renewable and non-renewable resources, of biodiversity and the irrevocability of its loss, and of 'reconciliation with the earth', as some of our informants put it.

Participants in these initiatives *act differently*. They reduce the size of their ecological footprint by saving energy and water, by buying local produce when they can, by helping revegetate degraded landscapes with indigenous plant species, by wasting less and littering not at all.

And they *relate differently* to their co-inhabitants of the earth – and not just to members of their own species. They also relate differently – more critically – to global warming sceptics and sluggish governments. They learn that changing things in the earth can be done locally, by people acting more or less in isolation, but that changing water means acting at least on the scale of catchments, and that changing air quality means acting on a global scale. They have thus learned that they must act not only one by one, as individuals trying to make a difference, but also politically, through action in social movements.

Participants in these 'Education for Sustainability' initiatives are reconstructing the practice architectures by which our collective taken-for-granted practices are currently constructed – the ways we currently think about the world, act in it, and relate to each other and to nature. They want to change us, not just themselves, but they aim to do so by *participatory* and *democratic* means – by involving us in open discussion about the issues involved, by involving us in the process of changing the ways we use the Earth's resources and by encouraging us to join them in their advocacy for social and political change.

'Education for Sustainability' is the educational face of a global social movement. The advocates of 'Education for Sustainability' I am meeting in my research are curiously and enduringly participatory and democratic, despite the urgency of the challenges the world faces. It is as if they believe that global political systems cannot be expected to make the required changes sufficiently quickly, so they

appeal directly to their fellow citizens, inviting them to change governments that do not act.

The industrial practice architectures that have made our era possible must be reconstructed – the ways we generate and use energy and the resources of the planet. The necessary changes will take decades to complete. Inevitably, we will all be drawn into the work of reconstruction, not just by using different resources and technologies but also by living differently – practising differently. The task of transformation required is vast, but it is also intimate. It involves each one of us in self-transformation, and it involves us in tasks of collective self-transformation – the first-person plural. In such circumstances, we can expect to see critical action research on a very large scale – not self-consciously as a form of 'research', but as a process of collective self-transformation, as a practice-changing practice.

When we come to ask whether we are changing the existing practice architectures of our world well enough or fast enough or in the right directions, we are asking for evidence about how well or fast we are changing and about the consequences of changing in this or that direction. This search for evidence – for clearer and deeper understandings of the consequences of what we do – is the 'research' part of this critical action research. If 'Education for Sustainability' initiatives are a model of what critical action research will be in the years ahead, then this kind of action research will no longer appear to be a specialised research methodology for the social sciences, but a practical, philosophical way of life – a way we can collectively learn the consequences of our human activity, the consequences of our social practice.

Note

This paper was presented as the Opening Address at the IV Congreso Internacional Sobre Investigación-Acción Participativa, University of Valladolid, Spain, 18–20 October, 2007.

References

Carr, W., and S. Kemmis. 1986. *Becoming critical: Education, knowledge and action research.* London: Falmer.
Dewey, J. 1916. *Education and democracy.* New York: Macmillan.
Dunne, J. 1993. *Back to the rough ground: 'Phronēsis' and 'technē' in modern philosophy and Aristotle.* Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.
Habermas, J. 1972. *Knowledge and human interests.* Trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro. London: Heinemann.
Habermas, J. 1974. *Theory and practice.* Trans. John Viertel. London: Heinemann.
Hadot, P. 1995. *Philosophy as a way of life.* Ed. and intro. Arnold I. Davidson. Trans. Michael Chase. Oxford: Blackwell.
Kemmis, S., and R. McTaggart. 1986. *The action research planner.* 3rd ed. Geelong, Vic.: Deakin University Press.
Kemmis, S., and R. McTaggart. 2005. Participatory action research: Communicative action and the public sphere. In *Handbook of qualitative research,* edn, ed. Norman Denzin and Yvonne Lincoln, 556–604. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Kemmis, S., and P. Grootenboer. 2008. Situating praxis in practice. In *Enabling praxis: Challenges for education,* ed. Stephen Kemmis and Tracey J. Smith, 37–62. Rotterdam: Sense.
Kemmis, S., and T.J. Smith, eds. 2008. *Enabling praxis: Challenges for education.* Rotterdam: Sense.
Schatzki, T. 1996. *Social practices: A Wittgensteinian approach to human activity and the social.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Schatzki, T. 2002. *The site of the social: A philosophical account of the constitution of social life and change.* University Park, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Wittgenstein, L. 1957. *Philosophical investigations.* Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe. London: Blackwell.

Young, I.M. 1990. *Justice and the politics of difference.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.