

# ARALIG Network PhD Course - June 2009

---

## Action Research Action Learning: Social Learning in Nature-Society Relations

### Theme: The Politics of Action Research & Creative Methods for Action Research

---

**Venue:** Wageningen University, the Netherlands.  
1-4 June 2009

#### **Course organizers:**

Action Research Action Learning Interest Group (ARALIG)  
Wageningen University – Environmental Science Group and Social Science Group  
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Natural Resource Management and Livelihoods Research School NRML  
Roskilde University – Department of Environmental, Social and Spatial Change

#### **Sponsors:**

CERES - Research School for Resource Studies for Development (The Netherlands)  
LEB-foundation – Wageningen University Foundation  
Communication and Innovation Studies, Wageningen University  
Education and Competence Studies, Wageningen University  
Irrigation and Water Engineering Group, Wageningen University  
Strategic research program “Sustainable spatial development of ecosystems, landscapes, seas and regions” funded by the Dutch Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Conservation and Food Quality, and carried out by WUR.

#### **Lecturers, speakers and facilitators:**

Professor Nadarajah Sriskandarajah (Swedish University of Agric Sciences, Uppsala)  
Professor Kurt Aagaard Nielsen (Roskilde University Center, Denmark)  
Dr. Hans Peter Hansen (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala)  
Professor Cees Leeuwis (Wageningen University)  
Dr. Cony Almekinders (Wageningen University) – [to be confirmed]  
Associate Professor Arjen Wals (Wageningen University)  
Dr. Erika Bjureby (Greenpeace, Amsterdam) – [to be confirmed]

#### **Coordinators (for contact):**

Janwillem Liebrand (PhD candidate Wageningen University):  
e-mail: [Janwillem.Liebrand@wur.nl](mailto:Janwillem.Liebrand@wur.nl)  
Riti Hermán Mostert (graduate Wageningen University and Manchester University):  
e-mail: [ritihermanmostert@gmail.com](mailto:ritihermanmostert@gmail.com)  
Cristian Alarcon Ferrari (PhD candidate Swedish University of Agric. Sc., Uppsala):  
e-mail: [Cristian-Alarcon.Ferrari@sol.slu.se](mailto:Cristian-Alarcon.Ferrari@sol.slu.se)

#### **Introduction**

Today's development and environmental problems seem both more urgent as well as more complex than those of the past. Meeting tomorrow's food and bio-fuel demands with conserving natural environments and bio-diversity while also adapting to the effects of climate change provide the larger framework in which today's development and environmental “professionals” have to operate. New challenges and complexities

call for new modes of operation, new approaches and new types of knowledge and skills. On such strategy is Action Research and Action Learning (ARAL).

Centralistic and technocratic approaches to solve development and environmental problems are making place for approaches that acknowledge the inherently political character of development and environmental management and the plurality of its actors, institutions, discourses and knowledge systems. Action Research Action Learning (ARAL) is a family of methodologies which embraces these complexities by engaging with actors and stakeholders to trigger processes of change into a normatively desirable direction.

The Action Research Action Learning Interest Group (ARALIG) 2009 invites you to take part in a four-day PhD course in Wageningen, the Netherlands, to discuss and reflect on Action Research Action Learning (ARAL). Based on topics that emerged in the last ARALIG workshop in Budapest on "*Methods and Tools in Action*", three purposes for this workshop are formulated:

### **Purpose of the workshop**

The first purpose of the workshop is to discuss to "politics" of action research. The ultimate goal of action research is to change practices, for example (policy) steps to deal with climate change. But what to do when certain actors do not want to change practices, and are unwilling to co-operate in a joint learning/ social learning research project? How do you position yourself as a researcher? When does research and scholarly activism become missionary work? The goals of action research and how to change power relations are central to this theme.

The second purpose of the workshop is to learn more about creative methods for Action Research. ARAL is based on the assumption that actors can, and know how to express themselves. But what if people cannot speak freely due to existing power relations. How can you creatively ensure that people express themselves? How to get actors involved in an action research and social learning project? And what are challenges in dealing with power relations within the use of creative methods for action research?

The third purpose of the workshop is to link early stage researchers (PhD students) with experienced researchers to discuss ARAL experiences and critically reflect on its use in own and others research situations. In addition, the workshop provides a learning experience by visiting to an organization that assists rural communities to articulate their own "village development plans".

### **Aim of ARALIG**

To improve the ARALIG network and develop new links between students and research institutions from different parts of the world.

#### **Lectures:**

- To present theory and methodology of various ARAL methods.
- To discuss the relevance and use of ARAL in nature-society relations.

#### **Workshops/ visits:**

- To visit an organization that assists rural communities to build their own village development plans through ARAL methods.
- To learn and discuss about case studies that applied ARAL methods.
- To experiment with creative methods for Action Research.

#### **Reflection**

- To link lectures with personal learning experiences and own research.
- To discuss with facilitators in groups own papers and ARAL.

**Venue:** The workshop will take place at two places (close to each other).

Monday 1 June 2009 (2<sup>nd</sup> Whitsunday): “Lawickse Allee 13” (LA13), centre for culture and debate in Wageningen, the Netherlands. The address is “Lawickse Allee 13”. Please see website: [www.la13.nl](http://www.la13.nl)

Tuesday to Thursday, 2-4 June 2009: Business centre “Compotex” (or “de Patio”) in Wageningen, the Netherlands. The address is “Costerweg 5”.

**Time:** The workshop will be held on 1-4 June 2009.

**Paper:** The deadline for papers is 15 May 2009. Max. 2500 words.

**Participants:** Max. 30 persons    **Credits:** 4 ECTS

**Course fee:** € 50 (euro). Paid at the first day of the workshop.

<b>Day 1: Introduction and workshop</b>		
(2 <sup>nd</sup> Whitsunday)		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Speakers/ facilitators</b>
08:30-09:30	Registration, coffee, word of welcome	Christian, Riti, Janwillem
09:30-10:30	Introduction lecture on ARAL	Sriskandarajah
10:30-10:45	Break for tea/ coffee	
10:45-12:15	1 <sup>st</sup> Presentation Participants (5 min pp)	All (Riti as facilitator)
12:15-13:15	Lunch	
13:15-17:00	Workshop on an Action Research project in national parks in Denmark	Kurt Aagaard Nielsen Hans Peter Hansen
17:00-20:30	FREE	
20:30-(...)	Drink in pub	For those who want

<b>Day 2: Group work and (open) lectures</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Speakers/ facilitators</b>
09:00-10:00	2 <sup>nd</sup> Presentation participants (5 min pp)	All (Riti as facilitator)
10:00-10:15	Break for tea/ coffee	
10:15-12:00	Group work – link workshop of day 1 to own research & paper	4 groups with facilitators (Sri, Kurt, Hans)
12:00-13:00	Lunch	
13:00-14:00	Lecture “ <i>Transformative research with a planetary conscience</i> ”	Ass. Prof. Arjen Wals
14:00-15:00	Lecture “ <i>Research in Action</i> ”	Dr. Cony Almekinders
15:00-15:15	Break for tea/ coffee	
15:15-16:15	Lecture “ <i>Action research in competing claims contexts</i> ”	Prof. Cees Leeuwis
16:15-16:30	Break for tea/ coffee	
16:30-17:30	Lecture “ <i>Climate and Action Research</i> ”	Dr. Erika Bjureby
17:30- 20:00	FREE	FREE
20:00-21:00	Historical walk in Wageningen	For those who want

<b>Day 3: Visit to Action Research Project</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Speakers/ facilitators</b>
8:30-10:00	Group work - link lectures of day 2 to own research & paper	4 groups with facilitators (Sri, Kurt, Hans)
10:00-10:15	Break for tea/ coffee	
10:15-11:15	Travel to field location	Bus
11:15-13:00	Meeting with "VKK" and explanation of their action research method/ model	All
13:00-14:00	Lunch at location	
14:00-17:00	Visit to one of the VKK villages (explanation, questions etc.)	All
17:00-19:00	ARALIG Dinner at location	All (covered by ARALIG)
19:00-20:00	Travel back to Wageningen	

<b>Day 4: Workshop and closure</b>		
<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Speakers/ facilitators</b>
9:00-10:00	Group work - link field visit of day 3 to own research & paper	4 groups with facilitators
10:00-10:15	Break for tea/ coffee	
10:15-12:00	Workshop " <i>Creative methods for AR</i> "	Riti
12:00-13:00	Lunch	
13:00-14:30	Workshop " <i>Creative methods for AR</i> "	Riti
14:30-16:00	Plenary session and evaluation	Sri, Christian, Riti and Jw

#### **Information field visit:**

On the third day (3 June) a field visit is planned to the (civil) association "*Vereniging Kleine Kernen*" (VKK), which translates as "Association Rural Communities" (see for website in Dutch: <http://www.lvkk.nl/>). VKK is a "rural community promotion association" – for instance, rural communities/ villages can become member - and VKK applies a participatory learning model to support rural communities to develop their "village development plans" with the overall goal to empower rural communities and produce better plans for development. VKK works in the middle of national -, provincial - and municipal government, as well as, nature conservation organizations, water boards, tourism and farmers, and has experience with dealing with "social learning processes" and "conflicting interests".

#### **Recommended reading:**

Adjei-Nsiah, S.; Leeuwis, C.; Giller, K.E.; Kuyper, T.W. 2008. Action research on alternative land tenure arrangements in Wenchi, Ghana: learning from ambiguous social dynamics and self-organized institutional innovation. *Agriculture and Human Values* 25 (3) , p. 389-403. [Available on internet](#)

Almekinders, Conny; Leni Beukema and Coyan Tromp (eds.). 2009. *Research in Action*. Mansholt Graduate School, Wageningen University, Wageningen.

Corcoran, Peter Blaze; Arjen E.J. Wals (eds.). 2004. *Higher Education and the Challenge of Sustainability. Problematics, Problems and Practice*. Springer Publishers. See website:

<http://www.springer.com/education/higher+education/book/978-1-4020-2026-1>

E.N.A. Dormon, C. Leeuwis, F.Y. Fiadjoe, O. Sakyi-Dawson and A. van Huis. 2007. Creating space for innovation: the case of cocoa production in the Suhum-Kraboaa-Coalter District of Ghana. *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability* 5, p. 232-246. [Available on internet](#)

Giller, K.E.; Leeuwis, Cees; Andersson, J.A.; Andriessse, W.; Brouwer, A.; Frost, P.; Hebinck, P.; Heitkönig, I.M.A.; Ittersum, M.K. van; Koning, N.B.J.; Ruben, R.; Slingerland, M.A.; Udo, H.M.J.; Veldkamp, A.; Vijver, C.A.D.M. van de; Wijk, M.T. van; Windmeijer, P.N. 2008. Competing Claims on Natural Resources: What Role for Science? *Ecology and Society* 13 (2), p. 1-34. [Available on internet](#)

Herr, Kathryn; and Gary L. Anderson. 2005. *The Action Research Dissertation. A guide for students and faculty*. Sage

Huis, A. van; Jiggins, J.; Kossou, D.K.; Leeuwis, C.; Röling, N.; Sakyi-Dawson, O.; Struik, P.C.; Tossou, R.C. 2007. Can convergence of agricultural sciences support innovation by resource-poor farmers in Africa? The cases of Benin and Ghana. *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability* 5 (2-3), p. 91 - 108. [Available on internet](#)

Reason, P. Bradbury, H. (eds.). 2006. *Handbook of Action Research*, London: Sage.

Wals, Arjen E.J. 2007. *Social Learning towards a sustainable world. Principles, perspectives and praxis*. Wageningen Academic Publishers. See website: <http://www.wageningenacademic.com/sociallearning>

Wals, Arjen E.J.; Noor van der Hoeven and Harm Blanken. 2009. *The Acoustics of social Learning. Designing learning processes that contribute to a more sustainable world*. Wageningen Academic Publishers. See website: [http://www.senternovem.nl/mmfiles/acoustics-digital%20def\\_tcm24-290164.pdf](http://www.senternovem.nl/mmfiles/acoustics-digital%20def_tcm24-290164.pdf)