



Action research vs. Design research: Using Practice research as a lens for comparison and integration

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Background

- Action research
 - Since long an established research approach in IS
- Design research
 - A growing interest in IS
- Many scholars have identified similarities between AR and DR
 - Some have identified important differences
- There exist several comparisons and also attempts for integration
- Different views and controversies
 - A need for more to say!

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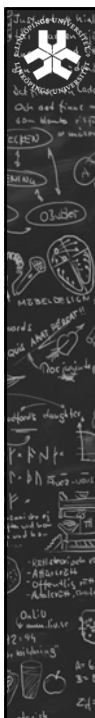
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Purpose

- To contribute to **further investigation** of **similarities** and **differences** between AR and DR
- A new angle in comparing AR and DR: Use of the **Practice research** approach as **lens** and **common yardstick** for analysis and comparison
- A proposal for an integrated approach of AR, DR and PR: **Practice research through Intervention and Design**
- The rationale for this study is that IS scholars need **guidance in choosing** between AR and DR and also possible combinations of them

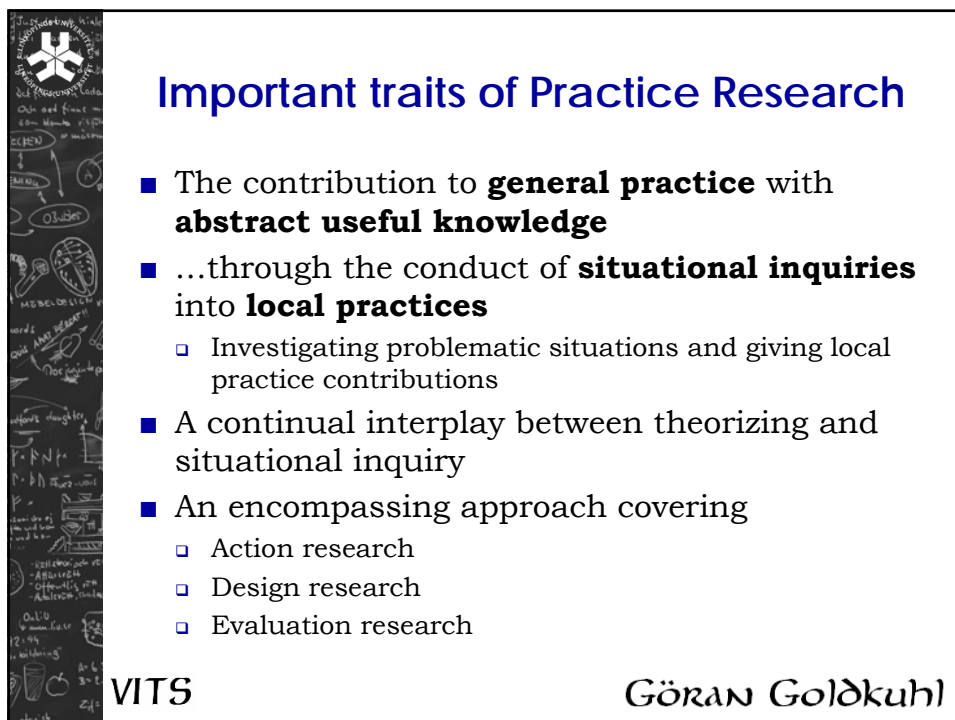
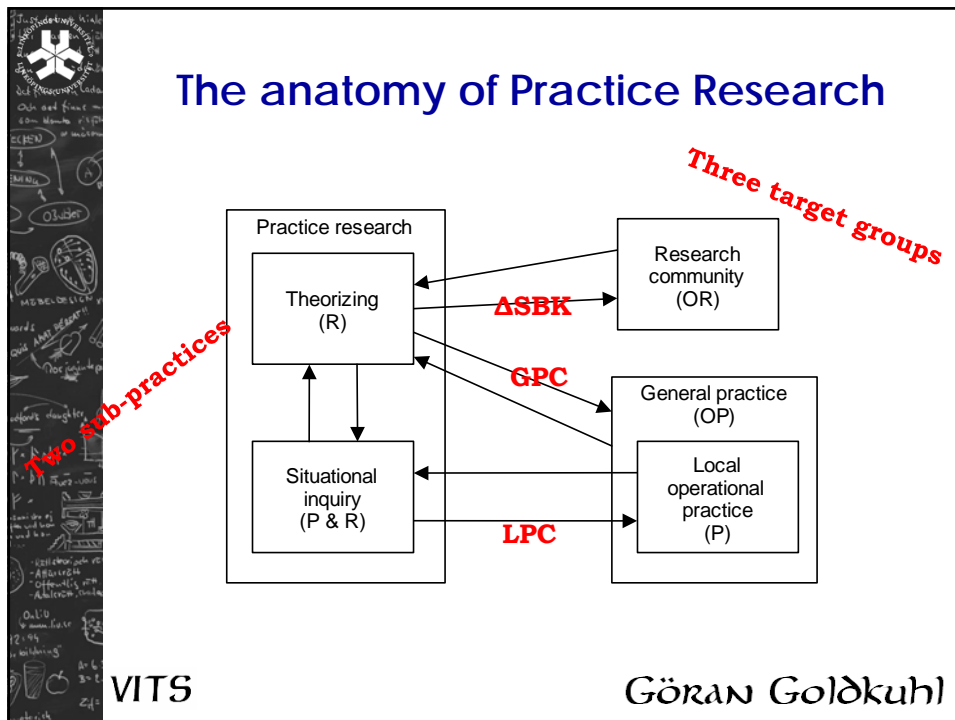
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What's in the paper?

- Description of the practice research approach
- Review of AR – DR comparisons
- Review of AR – DR integrations
- Study of AR from a PR perspective
- Study of DR from a PR perspective
- A PR based comparison of AR and DR
- A PR based integration of AR and DR
- Conclusions
 - PR, AR, DR relations
 - AR
 - DR
 - PR

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Practice research described in

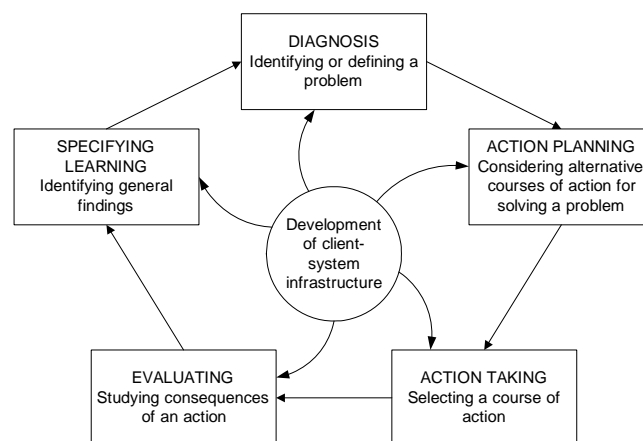
- Goldkuhl G (2008) Practical inquiry as action research and beyond, *Proceedings ECIS-2008*
- Goldkuhl G (2011) The research practice of practice research: theorizing and situational inquiry, *Systems, Signs & Actions*
- Goldkuhl G (2012) From action research to practice research, *Australasian Journal of Information Systems*

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Action research



The cyclical process of Canonical Action Research
(from Susman & Evered, 1978)

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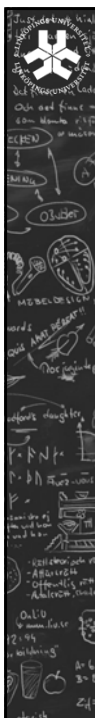


Action research from a practice research view

Target practices/communities	AR outcomes
Research community	Additions to scientific body of knowledge
General practice	Not specified
Local operational practice	Intervention (=LPC)

PR activities	AR activities
Theorizing	Specifying learning as abstraction
Situational inquiry	Diagnosis, action planning, action taking, evaluation; specifying learning as local learning.

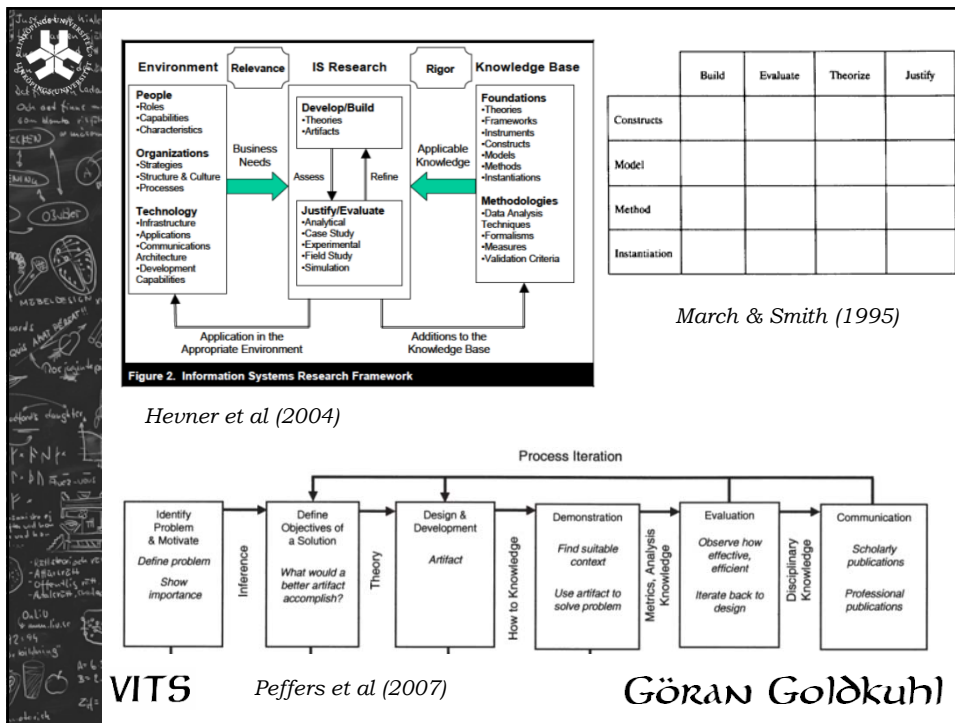
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Action research from a practice research view

- Adaptation and dissemination of knowledge to general practice is not explicitly recognized in AR
- The AR process has a main focus on “problem solving & change” (situational inquiry)
 - theorizing is down-played
- Theorizing activities in AR are seen as taking place after problem solving
 - not as a continual interplay with or support to a situational inquiry
- AR intervention can be of diverse kinds following the four problem solving stages
 - diagnosis intervention, design intervention, implementation intervention and evaluation intervention

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Design research from a practice research view

PR activities	DR activities
Theorizing	Theorize, justify (disputable if part of DR)
Situational inquiry	Design practice: Build and evaluate

PR activities	DR activities
Theorizing	Abstract, generalize, theorize
Situational inquiry	Design practice: Problem analyse, build (including demonstrate) and evaluate

Target practices/communities	DR outcomes
Research community	Abstract design knowledge (constructs, methods, design theory)
General practice	Abstract design knowledge (constructs, methods, design theory)
Local operational practice	Situational artefacts (models, systems)

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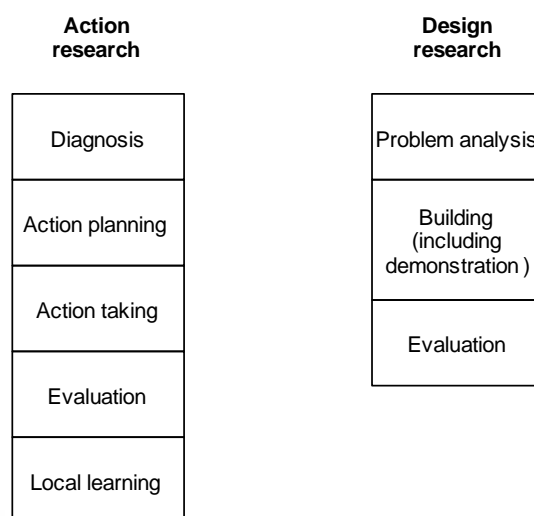
Design research from a practice research view

- The notions of local practice and general practice are not explicitly acknowledged, although this distinction can be traced implicitly
- There is no clear differentiation of artefacts as situational or abstract, but it possible to classify the artefacts into these two categories
 - Models and systems (instantiations) can be seen as situational artefacts and constructs and methods as abstract artefacts
- The main focus in DR is on the design process. The role of theorizing is unclear in DR
 - some scholars down-play it, others emphasize it
- Design practice (of DR) should be seen as a kind of design oriented situational inquiry
 - Different DR models have differing scope and content of the design practice

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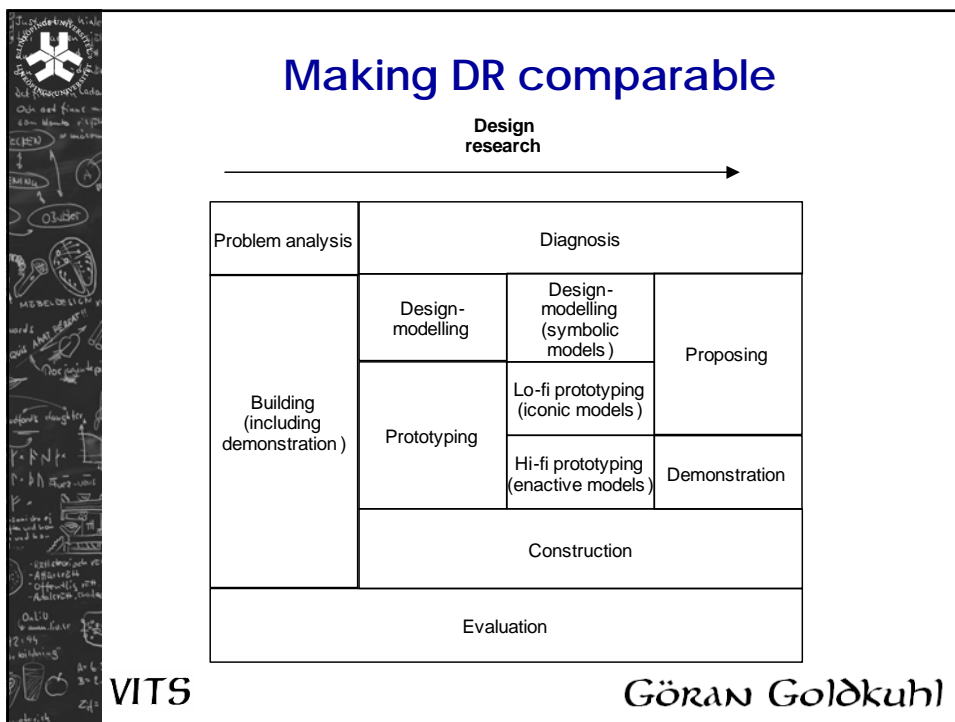
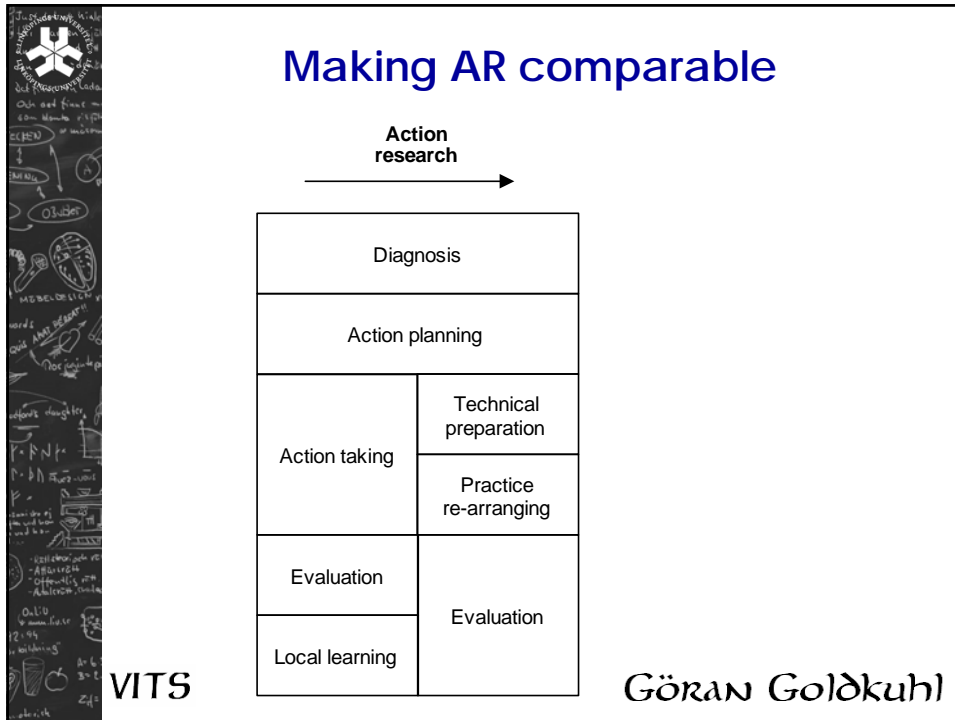
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AR vs DR as Situational inquiry (1)



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AR vs DR as Situational inquiry (2)

Action research	Design research
Diagnosis	Diagnosis
Action planning	Proposing
Technical preparation	Demonstration
	Construction
Practice re-arranging	
Evaluation	Evaluation

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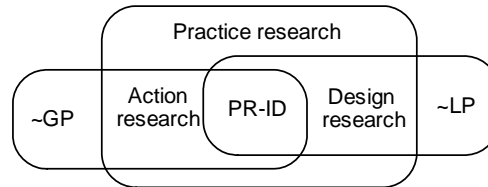
Integrating AR vs DR

Action research	Design research	Practice research
Diagnosis	Diagnosis	Diagnosis
Action planning	Proposing	Proposing
Technical preparation	Demonstration	Demonstration
	Construction	Construction
Practice re-arranging		Practice re-arranging
Evaluation	Evaluation	Evaluation

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Conclusions: PR, AR, DR overlaps



- If AR is conducted with no orientation towards general practice, then this should not be seen as practice research
- If DR is conducted (as in a computer science manner) with no reference to any local practice, then this cannot be considered to be practice research

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