

SUSTAINING OUR SOCIAL AND NATURAL CAPITAL

Proceedings of the 12th ANZSYS Conference

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EDITORIAL

SUSTAINING OUR SOCIAL AND NATURAL CAPITAL

Roger Attwater & John Merson

Our efforts to sustain our communities, and the natural environments that support them, are challenged by our ability to communicate effectively between our different forms of knowledge. Respect for diversity and difference, drawing upon all our methods of inquiry, advocacy, and learning to find common ground, are all part of the integrative approach needed to address the complexity of the challenges we face. This conference was an opportunity for practitioners from broad ranging traditions to share their experiences regarding integrative and innovative approaches that can make a difference.

Systems thinkers from across the globe were invited to participate in the conference through submitting a paper, contributing to workshops, and involvement in the range of planned and emergent activities. Papers were invited, on any aspects of relevance to the conference themes, and were peer reviewed prior to the conference by contributors within each thematic panel. The intent of this was to assist a process of dialogue between contributing authors. The conference themes included:

- Resilience, ecology and governance;
- Cultural knowledge and heritage;
- Creativity, organization and complexity;
- Systems thinking and dynamics;
- Social sustainability and community;
- Livelihood, innovation and opportunity;
- Language, learning and transdisciplinary practice;
- Engineering systems and infrastructure design.

The following chapters reflect these thematic plenary panels in which papers were presented and discussed. Each chapter begins with a brief overview from the chairperson(s) of each theme. The structure of these themes was also followed through into a conversation mapping exercise which followed the plenary panels of papers. A brief outline of the conversation mapping exercise is provided in Appendix 1, along with a summary of some of the key issues and discussion points which emerged. As well as this dialogue around thematic issues, planned activities included a 'circle of elders' discussion, workshops, and field trips.

The 'circle of elders' term was an after dinner round table discussion including a number of respected systems practitioners. The conversation was moderated by Stuart Hill, and included Richard Bawden, Bob Dick, Kay Fielden, Gerald Midgley, and Ray Ison. Workshops were contributed over the last two days of the conference by Bob Dick, Andrew Gaines, Susan Goff Janet McIntyre, and Jim Sheffield. A local field trip on the last morning of the conference enabled delegates to visit the local landscape, drawing upon local government initiatives with Geoffrey Smith and Jasmine Payget, and indigenous cultural perspectives with Chris Tobin. Within the conference venue, an exhibition of artwork reflecting cultural and indigenous perspectives was organized by Cheryle Yin-Lo, Tracey Allen and Rosie Forsyth-Jackson. Other exhibits included photographs of Californian coastal issues by Kathy Pompe, local conservation initiatives by the Blue Mountains City Council, and the East Timor Sisters, all of which contributed to a vibrant venue. We would also like to acknowledge the support of the Blue Mountains City Council, along with funding from Sydney Catchment Authority. Finally, we'd like to thank our colleagues at the Blue Mountains World Heritage Institute for their involvement.