

Exploring strategies for social and ecological sustainability

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With the ongoing damage being done to our social-ecological systems, we are more than ever pressed by the need to 'do something' – but where do we want to go and what must therefore be done? Where should we direct our energies for truly effective change? Are there working frameworks that might help us agree on actions in a meaningful sense without being 'bogged down' by endless discussion, negotiation and the inevitable compromises? What types of planning and actions might 'agreement' relate to anyway?

This workshop will explore such questions, drawing inspiration from systems theorists, with acknowledgment of emergent knowledge and processes and the conundrums of planning for the unpredictable. Emergence, by its nature, is unknowable in a precise or even broad sense. It is therefore a challenge to create meaningful collective change wherein guarantees can be made for social and ecologically sustainable outcomes.

With reference to the above, this workshop will provide a forum to experience different collective planning approaches, with varying reference to: visioning, problematising, examination of options, goal-setting, action, dialogue, choice and change. The possible strengths and pitfalls of several approaches will be explored and participants will have the opportunity to offer and learn about different and new approaches, perhaps emanating from the 'emergent knowledge' of the workshop discussions and exercises. New insights might then emerge which participants can bring into their social-ecological thinking and activism with others in the future.

Certainly, the workshop will provide an experiential and dialogical space within which a range of possibilities between the paralysis of 'it's too complex' at one extreme and short-sighted simplistic solutions at the other might be contemplated and explored, drawing on the wisdom and nous of fellow participants.