



ANZSEENEWS

News from Ecological Economics in Australia and New Zealand

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A New Year and a New
Executive
Happy 2009!



Election of new ANZSEE Exec. and Office Bearers

The 2008 ANZSEE Annual General Meeting was held on Dec. 4 2008 via telephone hookup. The newly elected office-bearers and executive committee are:

President: Wendy Proctor

Vice Pres. and Treasurer: Vicky Forgie

Vice President: Steve Hatfield Dodds

Secretary: Oscar Montes de Oca Munguia

Executive members:

Ralph Chapman

MD Younus

Kim McClymont

Boyd Blackwell

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ISEE 2008 Conference

Vicky Forgie reports on the ISEE 2008 Conference in Nairobi: “Applying Ecological Economics for Social and Environmental Sustainability” August 7-11 2008

To take on the organisation of a large international conference you have to be brave as well as a bit foolhardy, but this is not usually regarded as a prerequisite for *attending* a conference!

Unfortunately for the ISEE Board, after making the decision to hold the 10th biennial conference of the International Society for Ecological Economics in Nairobi, Kenya, in early 2008 post-election violence erupted on the streets of Nairobi. As a result, Kenya changed overnight from a country seen as relatively stable, as indicated by the steady increase of visitors (from about 400,000 in 1980 to almost 1.5 million in 2005), to one categorised as ‘high-alert’ with warnings that ‘travel should be avoided’. Despite these concerns, the ISEE Board continued with its resolve to hold the international conference in Nairobi: the outcome was a truly unique experience for all who attended.

The conference took place at the United Nations Environmental Programme headquarters, located 20 minutes from downtown Nairobi, and the setting and facilities were brilliant. Both inside and outside the high security area, the atmosphere was friendly and welcoming. The Rt. Hon. Raila Odinga, Prime Minister of the Republic of Kenya, opened the conference at the end of the first day of pre-conference workshops and short courses. As is always the case with ISEE conferences, the challenge is how to maximise the number of events and presentations across a broad range of interesting themes and issues you can get to.

International Payments for Ecosystem Services (IPES) was a workshop as well as a concept that came up regularly throughout the conference, which indicates it is an area gaining traction. Four funds for this purpose are being considered by the UNEP and IUCN: a global watershed fund; a global biodiversity fund; a global spectrum fund; and an indigenous knowledge fund.

Arjen Hoekstra delivered a stimulating presentation on water-footprint products and reported on the interest by business in this important, emerging

area of research. Pavan Sukhdev, in his introduction to The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity project (TEEB), made the point that the loss of natural capital per year is estimated at 1.5 times the value in the English stock market. It is alarming to see that such loss can be so easily dismissed when the current stock market meltdown generates so much anxiety and fear. A particularly insightful plenary was delivered by Marina Fischer-Kowalski and Helga Weisz about the type of policy intervention required to reduce material use in Europe. Their research showed that advances in efficiency have enabled a high Human Development Index to be reached with half as much energy and carbon emissions as 30 years ago, but concluded that locking into existing infrastructure makes future reductions in material use difficult as infrastructure ‘stocks’ predetermine future outcomes.

The highlight of the conference for me was The Boulding Award acceptance speech by Manfred Max-Neef (the 2008 co-winner with Charles Perrings). Max-Neef’s “confessions of an ecological economist” began with a delightful narrative of the personal events from childhood through to his early years working as an economist for an international oil company, through to his ‘enlightenment’ as an ecological economist. He shared the outcome of a recent discussion between around 200 diverse thinkers on the subject of ‘sustainability’, hosted at Cambridge University. They agreed on five postulates that an economy should be based on:

1. The economy is to serve the people, not vice versa;
2. Development is about people, not objects;
3. Growth is not the same as development and development does not necessarily imply growth;
4. No economy is possible in the absence of ecosystem services;
5. The economy is a subsystem of the biosphere, hence permanent growth is impossible.

While these postulates may seem obvious as to be trivial, in fact many contradictions abound in the ‘real world’:

1. There are more slaves in the world now than before the abolition of slavery. This is a result of pure exploitation and demand for cheap goods.

ISEE Conference *cont.*

2. If people are less happy, growth in GDP does not benefit the people. Max-Neef cited Chile (where he lives) as an example: the Chilean economy is open and competitive and seemingly doing well. Yet in terms of quality of life indicators, a recent study ranked Chile poorly in terms of education (114 out of 125 countries) and equity issues (113 out of 125).

3. Exponential growth might theoretically continue forever, but there is growing awareness of the lack of correlation between economic growth and quality of life. The threshold hypothesis indicates that economic growth past a certain point causes quality of life to deteriorate.

4. Economic development is dependent on ecosystem services because they support the quality of

life.

5. Everywhere we see the economic system destroying life, but economic interests are not more important than life. Under no circumstance should an economic value be above the reverence for life.

Congratulations to the ISEE President, Peter May, the President of the African Society for Ecological Economics, Kevin Urama, and the Nairobi organising committee for the great conference they organised. On behalf of the ANZSEE members who were fortunate enough to attend, we extend a warm “asante sana”.

Dr Marjan van den Belt joins NZCEE

The New Zealand Centre for Ecological Economics has recently appointed a Principal Ecological Economist – Deputy Director, Dr Marjan van den Belt. For the last eight years Dr van den Belt has been running her consultancy business **Mediated Modeling Partners**, based in Maryland and Vermont, U.S.A. Mediated Modelling is a leading-edge systematic approach to accelerating integrated environmental, social and economic solutions into collaborative and adaptive management systems. The process involves bringing diverse and often oppositional stakeholders together into critical facilitated dialogues to gain the consensus essential for implementation of immediate courses of action and solutions, which will best meet everyone’s needs. Com-

puter model building is used as a mediation tool. (www.mediated-modeling.com)

Marjan comes from The Netherlands. She did her **Ph.D. study in Marine, Estuarine, and Environmental Science** at the University of Maryland, where her advisor was Dr. Herman Daly. Prior to that she obtained her **Masters of Business and Economics** from Erasmus University, Rotterdam, and worked in Sweden for Vattenfall AB, and her own consultancy business Waste Reduction International.

For more information on NZCEE see: www.nzcee.org.nz

Membership Interests

Information regarding ANZSEE members areas of interests and expertise is useful as it can foster collaboration and provide a ready access to references for work being in the ecological economics area in Australia and New Zealand. There is also some sponsorship available at Australian Universities for visiting lecturers to present seminars. With these objectives in mind we have sent out to all member a short spread sheet to fill in so we can list members contacts and interests (as a pdf to avoid spam) on line. If you would like to be included and have not been contacted please email forgiev@landcareresearch.co.nz .

2009 ANZSEE Conference: *Green Mileage in the Global Meltdown: An ecological economics way forward.*

The 2009 ANZSEE Conference is likely to be held in Darwin during October. The following themes will be the focus of the conference:

- o Renewable energy transformation
- o Climate change and Copenhagen
- o Indigenous perspectives and opportunities
- o Climate adaptation
- o Integrated assessment
- o Environmental values
- o Measuring progress in the 21st Century
- o Sustainable production and consumption

More details will be put on the website www.anzsee.org and emailed to members soon!



Charlotte Sunde and Vicky Forgie at the UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya