Notes from HEF re Socio-ecological change stream
March 2008

In 2007, the Human Ecology Forum began running a thematic topic stream interwoven with the years other topics and discussions. The 2007 thematic stream was ‘Knowledge and Truth’. For 2008, we aim to repeat the process, although the theme this year will be ‘Socio-ecological change: Who changes, why and how? How can we tell?’ The chair for the 2008 theme is Rod Griffith.

WHY
The theme for 2008 has been motivated by Rod Griffith. Rod’s concerns lie with opening up ways to understand how we might actually get a grip on changing (our own part of) the world in light of the challenges to the self such desires present, especially in context to our histories, and as unfolding in particular organisational, cultural and socio-material contexts often laced with conflict, struggle and incremental success. Considering how ubiquitous change is, how far-reaching the need to understand our role as change agents is (both at a personal and at the species level) it seems an auspicious time to explore the topic to more depth.

The theme involves a variety of different overlapping elements of which we hope to unpack during the year. Aspects of this process are detailed to follow, but as you may expect, this is tentative and open to change and expansion as required.

PROCESS

To explore issues in and around:

- mechanics of change vs the outcomes of change
- change – pace, direction and scale.
- discourses of change
- paradigms of change (ie., economic development)
- what is it to participate in collective change
- adapting to personal change
- acting as an agent of change (what are the consequences of taking positions of knowing and not-knowing in practice - to be less effective and then to be more effective)

We aim to unpack a heuristic of:

- Avenues of personal change
  - Drivers of change
  - Barriers to change
  - Feedback to change
  - Tensions to/of change

As an example of the above unpacked for further exploration we have:

- Tensions to/of change
  - Feedback or change (how will we know)?
  - Drivers of change?
    - Transformation ←→ Transaction
• Transaction is change without fundamental challenges to the underlying structure (is transaction enough to get us through to the future?)
• Transformation is change of a revolutionary form
  ▪ Incremental ↔ discontinuous
    • Incremental: piece by piece change
    • Discontinuous: staggered/abrupt shifts
  ▪ Deliberate ↔ self-organising
    • Natural systems are self-organising
    • Reflexivity
    • Human systems as self-organising now and then. Are socio-ecological systems self-organising
  ▪ Resilience ↔ adaptation
    • A resilient system does not change over time – it can be recognised as the same system

OUTCOMES
  ▪ Good discussion which may lead to much personal fervent!
  ▪ As many of us are working within or near sustainability agendas, to help us explore and see anew this particular societal change process.
  ▪ Building a more robust theory(ies) in and around change out of the discussion
  ▪ Have a fun time in the brain gym!

-------------