

From Betsan. December 2009

Here are a few summary notes on our assembly/hui in November 2009, and on a visit to Vanuatu and Australia

Watersheds and Governance



Watersheds group listening to Dr Huhanna Smith, Maori environmental leader

RESPONSE collaborated with a very dynamic Maori community and with Waterscape, a consultancy on river engineering and permaculture event. to host this ! Our shared interest in integrated governance is intended to contribute to intersectoral collaboration. As Gary Williams of Waterscape said ' the challenge is to bring people out of silos'. Groups represented at this local and environmentally oriented assembly included local community leaders, Maori, Pakeha and Pasefika groups with involvement in regional councils and municipal governance, engineers, lawyers, fisheries policy advisers, academics from science and environmental disciplines, educators, those with development interests, with recreational interests, researchers, writers and artists and philosophers.

We worked with the 'mountains to sea' framework which links oceans coasts and land but as yet our systems do not encompass these grand designs. Science is only now starting to confirm what has been 'common knowledge' amongst many coastal communities – the impacts of excess sediment and nutrients washing downstream into the coastal zone. This affects coastal fisheries, as well as fish species that migrate from rivers to sea to fulfil their life cycles. These include the grand tuna, or eels with a life span of 100 years or so, and tiny whitebait.

Stand out notes and ongoing questions:

- How do we provide for the voice of the environment in governance?
- A priority in Aotearoa-New Zealand across all sectors and interests, from water ecosystems to constitutional change, is for citizens from all walks of life and professions and roles to develop the capacity to support and work with Maori. It is commonly said that 'what is good for Maori is good for

everyone'. This refers to the holistic world views of Maori, and experience in integrating social, economic and environmental interests. This gathering was one contribution to building respect for indigenous approaches and the imperative of Maori involvement in governance.

- Rights often dominates interests in water, but responsibilities for the integrity of ecosystems was raised in papers and discussions, and specifically posed by Te Kawehau Hoskins as a principle of governance to be further investigated.
- There is a worldwide move to privatise water. Greg Ford's paper gave an important warning but there was not time to engage adequately with privatization and the equally important imperative of governance of the commons.
- Sustainability and wisdom in the governance and management of water ecosystems depends on knowledge of local people with experience over time. Provision for this to be respected, alongside knowledge from scientific and professional expertise is a key to the spectrum of information required at the tables of decision-making.
- The outstanding collection of papers on so many topics related to river ecosystems, watersheds and governance prepared for the symposium will be gathered into an edited collection. This will provide a great resource for the view that human wellbeing is dependent on healthy waterways, and support for bringing laws and systems of integrated governance into effect.

Vanuatu, December 2009



Maria, Rosalyn, Betsan, Andrina



Jo and Andrina,, at Wan Smolbag Theatre

A visit to Vanuatu was hosted by a Ni Vanuatu woman, Andrina Thomas, known to us though her studies at a university in New Zealand. We found that women are bearing large burdens of extended family responsibilities – and that in urban areas there are added pressures of financial responsibility upon women who have jobs.

Highlights of the visit included a village 'Mountains to reef' watersheds management programme, and an urban theatre group called 'Wan Smolbag Theatre'. They generate ecological literacy through plays and films and hosting

large events from their own organic gardens and produce. We asked them to participate in Lets Take care of the Planet.

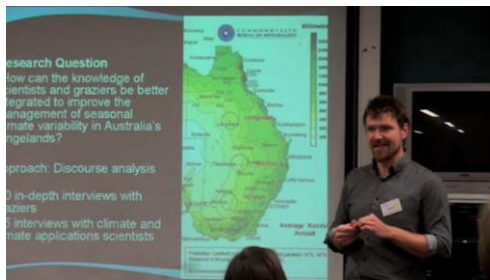
New research is being led by a Ni Vanuatu woman on the restoration of traditional governance and authority for peace-building. We anticipate involving this courageous woman in the Pacific Assembly in 2010.

Indigenous tribal systems are strong although in urban areas they become somewhat fractured and distorted by the mixture of work and unemployment. The story of people moving to towns in search of new opportunities has been well documented and was readily observed. We heard from women about the burden of their responsibilities to support family members who do not have sources of livelihood. We met women in leadership roles in organizations as well as those working in markets, the Mamas, and heard the stories of women bearing the weight of family responsibilities.

This made us reflect on the care that is needed in advocating for the concept of responsibility and the need to be attuned to the context of different situations.

Brisbane, Australia. Science, Technology, Society conference.

The conference brought an opportunity to activate the Across Oceania network in Australia. I gave a presentation and visited an 'ecotechnology' scientist with whom we have been associated for many years. It is impossible to adequately relay the content of a 3 day conference on science, technology and society conference.



Conference presentation

Contributions from Japan, Taiwan, India and from New Zealand meant that the conference connected us to very diverse contexts, but there was no representation from Pacific countries.

Strong critiques of development and the magnitude of poverty also brought some interesting approaches, such as 'developing countries are part of the solution to the climate change crisis' – of course these are the countries with much smaller carbon footprints. My interest was arrested by the challenge that we are too focused on the carbon aspect of unsustainability, and there are just as compelling concerns of

nitrogen, phosphorous, the acidification of oceans and the collapse of fisheries. With all the knowledge we have there is still very little being done on adaptation.

The social ethos of science as a public good was considered to have given way to science as a market good. Indigenous contributors referred to the systemization of traditional knowledge through memorization and through people trained to be repositories of knowledge to ensure continuity of accumulated experience. At this conference, as in another conference on ethics and governance in New Zealand last week, there was interest in the models for governing the commons – oceans, fisheries, air, forests.

One surprise was to discover a researcher who is working with an ethics of responsibility and the challenge of the duty of care in the management of natural resources. Tabatha Wallington's research has identified responsibility as means to *active* engagement in the future, rather than the more passive method of 'accountability' – which does not directly address uncertainty and the limitations of knowledge.

We will share resources and make plans for collaboration. As I read the papers Tabatha has sent these can be shared amongst our networks.