

# Connecting Global Challenges and Collective Local Action: A Conference in Environmental Communication



**Date:** 24-25 October, 2007

**Venue:** Eklundshof, Uppsala

**Conference hosted by the Unit for Environmental Communication, Department of Urban and Rural Development, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. Sponsored by Formas.**

## **The issues**

As society continues to make new environmental policies and add ever more environmental goals to be achieved at the local level, the task of the professional who has to deal with the complexity, uncertainty and competing interests in the public sphere becomes harder and harder. Environmental Communication is the new field emerging at the very interface of nature and society as a way of not only constructing the environmental problems but also negotiating society's responses to them. One is the constitutive role of understanding our perception of the environment and of the problems at hand to work with, and the other is the more instrumental role of reaching out and creating change. The latter entails everything from getting the information across to the citizens to enabling the creation of collaborative networks and learning platforms which bring together the multiple stakeholders towards collective action.

The convergence of the two streams creates the scientific arena of Environmental Communication which draws its theoretical perspectives from a range of disciplines including communication science, social psychology, learning theory, systems theory, development studies and environmental science, and bases its professional practice in the coal face of communicative dilemmas and conflicting interests when trying to reach environmental objectives.

## **Global- Local linkages**

The environmental issues that have concerned citizens, practitioners and scholars alike at the local and national levels have clear links to what need to be discussed and acted upon at the international and global levels. Likewise, the challenges posed by environmental changes of a global magnitude, such as climate change, produce impacts on the environment and livelihood of local communities, demanding action eventually at the local level. So, in order for Environmental Communication as an arena for research, education and practice, and for it to realise desirable outcomes at the local level, the discourse and field experiences from international contexts as well as the driving forces at the global level have to be understood and acted upon. This will be the focal theme of the conference.

Most amount of work in Environmental Communication over the last two decades, and the shaping of it as a scientific arena has taken place in US institutions and in the context of a variety of contexts in North America. With the emphasis given to Sustainable Development at present in Europe, it is also timely that a conference on this theme is held this year centred on Nordic and European issues but with an international and global outlook. Such an event, we believe, will lead to the setting of the scope of the subject, recognition of a broad based research agenda and expansion of the fledgling network in Sweden into the European and international arena.

## **Registration and fee**

Register no later than September 29 to [Stina.Powell@sol.slu.se](mailto:Stina.Powell@sol.slu.se)

Conference fee is 1000SEK, including conference dinner.

Participants in need of a hotel room can book at e.g. Hotel Uppsala, Akademihotellet, Hotell Hörnan. At [www.uppsalatourism.se](http://www.uppsalatourism.se) there are also other alternatives available.

## Most welcome!



Forskningsrådet Formas



# Program

## Wednesday October 24

9.00 **Opening of conference**

9.30 Keynote presentation: **Discourse, Deliberation and Public Judgment: A systemic challenge for environmental communication.** *Professor Richard Bawden, University of Western Sydney, Australia*

10.20 Coffee

10.50 Keynote presentation: **Trinity of Voice, Legitimacy and Influence in Environmental Governance,** *Susan Senecah, Associate Professor, Environmental Studies, State University of New York, USA.*

11.45 Lunch

12.45 **World Café.** *Conference theme and agenda setting*

13.45 **Parallell workshops including a coffebreak**

| Workshop 1  | Workshop 2                                 | Workshop 3   | Workshop 4                   |
|---|--|--|------------------------------|
| <b>Learning to think and act systemically</b><br>Richard Bawden | <b>Self-initiated group</b><br>Sofie Joose | <b>Deconstructing a Happy Meal - Transformative learning in action</b><br>Arjen Wals | <b>Self-inistiated group</b> |

15.45-16.30 **Workshop reports Day 1**

**Social Space: film, walk, games, snacks**

18.00 **Conference dinner at Eklundshof**

### Invited Speakers

**Richard Bawden**, Professor at University of Western Sydney. He was formerly Foundation Dean and as the Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture and Rural Development for close to two decades, he was known for his leadership in the widely recognised curricular and institutional transformation based on a systems thinking paradigm. His recent publications include 'The Engagement Interface in a 'Risk Society', 'Systemic Development as a Paradigm for Sustainability – Learning to Learn Our Way Forward' and 'Learning to Learn and the 'Essential Learnings'.

**Arjen Wals** is Associate professor within the Education & Competence Studies Group of the Department of Social Sciences of Wageningen University, the Netherlands. His work revolves around environmental education and participation, action research and community problem solving, and, most recently, social learning in the context of sustainable living. Books he contributed to or edited include: 'Environmental education for empowerment', 'Creating sustainable environments in our schools', 'Higher education and the challenge of sustainability' and 'Social learning towards a sustainable world'. Wals is the past president of Caretakers of the Environment/International and of the Special Interest Group in Ecological and Environmental Education Research of the American Educational Research Association (AERA).

**Susan Senecah** is Associate Professor at SUNY, State University of New York in the field of Environmental Studies. She calls herself a "pracademic", believing in the importance to practice what you teach. Her research covers areas such as Communication aspects of public participation in the formation of environmental public policy/decisions, especially the origins, dynamics, persuasive strategies, and tactics of environmental campaigns, Legislative process, environmental public policy and Conflict and alternative dispute resolution, consensus building processes. Susan is speaking at our conference for the second time.

## Thursday October 25

9.00 **Welcome back!**

9.15 Keynote presentation: **Social Learning towards a more Sustainable World: New pathways for collaborative environmental action**, *Associate Professor Arjen Wals, Wageningen University, Netherlands*

10.15 Coffee

10.45 Keynote presentation: **Research and Action- Tasks for Environmental Communication**  
*Professor N. Sriskandarajah, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences*

11.45 Lunch

12.45 Parallel workshops: *Cases from practice and from research*

12.45  
**Natural reserves and peoples participation,**  
Hans Peter Hansen,  
RUC, Denmark

12.45  
**Networks and networking**  
Neil Powell, Swedish  
University of Agricultural  
Sciences

12.45  
**Communication, responsibility and behavioural change - are there connections?**  
Lotten Westberg & Lars  
Hallgren, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

14.00 Coffee

14.30 **Future search forum**  
*Where to with research?*

14.30 **Future search forum**  
*Where to with practice?*

15.15  
**Discussions and recommendations**

16.00-16.30 **Summing up and closure**