

The Commons Digest

formerly known as The Common Property Resource Digest

NO. 3 QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF THE COMMONS March 2007

Welcome to the spring 2007 edition of the *Commons Digest*. We discuss an important topic this issue: *What — or could — be the Future of the IASC?* In their opening commentary, *Erling Berge* and *Sanjeev Prakash* write an essay asking us, as members, to reflect upon the future of our Association in the face of our diverse membership, the problem of continuity and marginalization of members, and the threat of the IASC's interdisciplinary approach and paradigms becoming mainstream and being picked up by other organizations. *Bruce Currie-Alder* picks up on the positive aspect of commons research now being included in other fora that Erling and Sanjeev present, and he goes on to suggest that the IASC must lean to understand how commons research is used, link practice back into theory, and strengthen the voices of Southern members. In the next response essay, *Steven Donda* suggests that the diagnosis of the ills with the IASC has been made, and now is the time to start thinking about what can be done to avoid the tragedy. In her essay, *Minoti Chakravarty-Kaul* picks up on the issue of marginalization in the IASC to focus on our Association's recent name-change. She suggests we have lost a focal point when we took out the "property" in our name and suggests that property, and the associated historical context is vital for practitioners, researchers, and people. The Commons Forum closes with *Doris Capistrano* who suggests in her essay that though the challenges we now face as an Association are real, things are not so gloomy as Erling and Sanjeev suggest. She tells us now is the time for the IASC to rearticulate its goals and redefine its niche in the (now) populated field of commons research. All-in-all, a particularly interesting and important discussion and one which I hope you all join in as we work for the future of our Association. *Enjoy!*

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Commons Forum *Commentary*

Our Association Is ...

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IASC is a remarkable association in many ways. Pioneering a new area of cross-disciplinary research, it has deliberated over and realigned its mandate better to serve its core interests and goals. It continues to organise some memorable international and regional conferences. It has consistently broadened and diversified its membership base. And, in the process, it has probably helped to nurture a new breed of young professionals. Speaking on a personal level, few other associational gatherings of between 500-1,000 participants so effectively reproduce the informal intimacy of small groups — which can be both refreshing and conducive to discussion and sharing between persons of diverse backgrounds, cultures and interests — as do the biannual meetings of the IASC.

Yet (as we know), as an association broadens its scope and size, it also expands its heterogeneity – the diversity of stakeholder interests, perspectives, and professional backgrounds that seek representation in its

The Commons Digest

Formerly The Common Property Resource Digest

Published with support from
the Ford Foundation

Editor

Alyne E. Delaney



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formerly the International Association for the Study of
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forums and executive bodies. Our Association continues to witness an expansion from the original, research-oriented membership to include an increasing number of practitioners, organisational representatives and policy-makers. While this expanding diversity may be advantageous in furthering the Association's influence and purposes, how the transformation of membership will affect our collective priorities, internal democracy, organisational character and, not least, power structure, are matters that should concern us all.

The International Association for the Study of Commons started primarily as a network of various social science researchers (including economists) with an interest in natural resources. But also a few natural scientists with an interest in people were part of the network from the start. The work of its members and that of others ultimately transformed the field of commons studies into a broad, coherent platform for theoretical and applied research as well as policy analysis and prescription. As Past-President Narpat Jodha puts it in the first issue of *The Commons Digest*, through its conceptual and empirical work IASC helped replace the dominant "tragedy of the commons" scenario with an "opportunity of the commons" paradigm. Now the Association has broadened its substantive field from the study of environmental resources managed as common property to include all commons, tangible and intangible. Simultaneously, some members have engaged with emerging research fields relating to the global 'commons' (though this has generated at least some, probably healthy, controversy).

As our substantive horizons broaden we have simultaneously welcomed new kinds of members – policy-makers, donor representatives, and others whose primary fields are in practice and policy. This expansion will bring into the Association more diversity, varied experience and differentiated perspectives (though being very diverse and international right from the early 1990s, we were not lacking here!). But the same trend also raises many issues about the roles of researchers and practitioners that, we feel, need to be reflected on and discussed in relation to the Association's core aims.

One key issue concerns continuity and marginalization of parts of the membership. General meetings of the Association are structured around its conferences, which are primarily about presenting research papers and results and so are dominated by researchers. Practitioners and policy people may hop across sessions and even partici-

pate in some, but they are not at centre stage. Indeed, some might argue that practitioners are thus being marginalized at the conferences. Beneath the surface, however, there is a different dynamic at play. Many foundations and donor organizations support large policy and practice-based projects, mostly in developing countries, which are relevant to IASC's goals. Researchers employed by such projects usually find support to attend IASC's conferences as part of these projects. This creates interest, diversity and breadth of participation at conferences, but it also means there is a substantial "floating" membership and turnover in participation from one conference to the next.

Another group of "floating" members consists of young researchers and junior faculty members from North America and Europe. With limited travel funding, they must choose the conferences they attend carefully. Most people in this group attend an IASC conference only when they are working on a related project and believe they will derive substantial benefit from travelling the long distances that are often involved. For many of this group also, the first IASC experience may well be the last. So, while many former members who return to IASC's conferences after a longish gap are accused of "free riding" (flippantly, we hope!), maintaining a consistent, unbroken membership in the Association can be an acute problem for many. Clearly, some of the issues of sporadic, lapsed or just plain lack of membership, so often mentioned at conferences, are related to this problem.

If this is the case for junior faculty and research project staff, what about the senior researchers? It is true that quite a few of them have managed to return to the Association's conferences over the years, probably by learning to juggle with complex itineraries. However, funding for basic, long-term research on the commons, which some of them have successfully led over recent years, remains scarce and uncertain. Most such research exists in a handful of places, mainly in the USA and Canada. And senior researchers, inevitably, get older; many of ours may soon retire. So it would seem from the demographics of our Association that the research core is waning. Will practitioners and applied research project staff be able to fill this gap? Or do we require structures and incentives to retain and nurture our best researchers, especially the promising young ones?

Meanwhile, many of the young, innovative researchers who most often provide the fresh ideas and perspectives that the Association should value may begin to find it more beneficial to take their work to other conferences. As our

interdisciplinary approach and theoretical paradigms have gained acceptance mainstream associations have taken up topics close to our interests (for example, The European Association of Agricultural Economists), new specialised associations have taken parts of our topics and develop in new directions (International Society for New Institutional Economics (ISNIE)), and innovative workshops and specialised conferences abound: such as the workshops "Reinventing trust, collaboration and compliance in social systems" (April 2006) and "Various Approaches to Assessing the Evolution and Impact of Alternative Institutional Structures" (March 2007).

As the field of commons research broadens in all its diverse manifestations, will IASC perhaps be seen by such new networks as no longer a pivotal or novel enterprise, but just another group of researchers aging along with their association? We hope not.

Our perspective may seem an unduly pessimistic scenario to some readers. Perhaps the trends we have mentioned will change soon, or at least not peak in the same phase. For an association that values the engagement of its membership, not merely once every two years or so, but throughout its life and days, there is enough here to seriously consider and reflect upon. This contribution is intended as a small first step in that direction.

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Commons Forum *Response*

Common challenges - policy, theory and voice

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Berge and Prakash reflect on the role of IASC in light of the inclusion of commons research in other fora and increasing diversity in the IASC membership. Both of these trends are to be rejoiced yet force us to ponder the Association's future directions. Two decades of IASC have seen the commons transformed from a tragedy into an opportunity, from a rogue line of research into accepted practice. Given this success, one

IASC's conferences as part of these projects. This creates interest, diversity and breadth of participation at conferences, but it also means there is a substantial "floating" membership and turnover in participation from one conference to the next.

option is to simply disband IASC and allow its members to gravitate to other fora. Yet while the idea of the commons has gained currency elsewhere, the Association lies at the intersection of research and practice. To build on this position over the next two decades, IASC must understand how commons research is used, link practice back into theory, and strengthen the voices of Southern members.

First, IASC needs to understand how commons research is used. From the first critiques of Hardin's thesis, commons research has intended to inform policies that affect positive change in the quality of the commons and the lives of people that depend on them. Common property is a set of socially-evolved institutions to manage resources, thus commons research is inherently an applied field that involves people and policies. Much of attention has focused on understanding how existing institutions manage and maintain commons; yet little attention has been paid to how commons research is used, by whom, and to what purpose. How does IASC connect to the demand-side for research? How do policymakers learn about the commons? How do communities that depend on commons digest and act upon research? Taken seriously, such questions carry implications for how IASC structures and sets the agenda for its conferences. While other professional associations respond to pressures to 'publish or perish', IASC should encourage members to put research into use in order to enrich the commons. Good research and theory must lead to good practice.

Second, IASC must plug practice back into theory. The digital library of the commons contains numerous case studies, covering most regions of the world (the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia are under-represented). Yet the rate of growth in case studies has not been matched by efforts to synthesis experience and build upon existing commons theory. The line between researcher and practitioner can and does blur, and the same people exercise these roles at different times in their career. Case studies leap from theory into the study of practice, while many members have themselves become policymakers. Yet the reverse linkage tends to be weaker. Particularly troubling is inability of commons

theory to address how to engage settings where enabling conditions are not present, and the mismatch between the slow task of setting up new institutions and the limited timescale of available research funding. IASC needs to feed practice back into theory, and reinvest in the theoretical foundation of commons research. One starting point is methods for commons research, such as controlled experiments to compare baseline data with changes in the quality of commons over time, as well as changes in the lives of people that depend on such commons. In short, practice must shape theory.

Third, IASC should strive to strengthen the voices of its members in the South.

The increasing diversity within the IASC membership includes a growing number of members based in developing countries. These members connect IASC to a diversity of local realities. The insights gathered from such settings help us to learn what works and what does not; to distinguish useful insights from that which is context-dependent. Commons theory can only be enriched through testing under a variety of social, economic and biophysical conditions. Where many parts of Europe and North America have already been enclosed, it is in developing countries where the commons are most under siege and the opportunities to put research into use are greatest. Research cannot be passive when the lives of poor women and men depend on the quality of, and access to, the commons. IASC should enable practitioners in the South to develop their own conceptual understanding of the commons, and act as a platform for Southern voices to be heard within the global policy debates on the commons.

Berge and Prakash are also concerned about the role of the IASC membership and its future. They call for more active participation beyond regional and global conferences and the CPR digest. This suggests an opportunity for members to engage in an ongoing dialogue through blogging or wikis on the IASC website. Embracing such technologies can capture some of the energy of the networking that occurs spontaneously at the conferences. Other options include facilitated discussions on the challenges mentioned above. IASC could also seek to arrange peer-to-peer mentoring among members with different locations, backgrounds or levels of experience. IASC does face an issue of succession planning. As

original members approach retirement, there is a need to identify who and where are our younger members. What they are doing, and how to best engage and support them? Career paths in commons research are seldom linear, and will be less so in the future. There is a role for IASC in brokering mentoring relationships among members at different stages in their career in order to retain and nurture promising young members. An IASC focused on how research is used, linking practice back into theory, generating insights for both researchers and practitioners, which is also strengthening the voices of Southern members is an association I want to be a part of.

Additional Reading:

Julius Court and Simon Maxwell (2006) *Policy entrepreneurship for poverty reduction*. Warwickshire, UK: ODI and Practical Action Publishing.

Fred Carden (2005) Capacities, contexts, conditions: the influence of IDRC - supported research on policy processes. *Evaluation Highlight no. 5* [online] www.idrc.ca/evaluation

Jeffrey Sayer and Bruce Campbell (2003) *The Science of sustainable development*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

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Commons Forum *Response*

“OUR ASSOCIATION... Should Focus Its Goals”

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Erling and Sanjeev’s article on the current trends of performance and activities triggers one’s mind to seriously think and reflect on the future on IASC. Certainly, the future of IASC does not look healthy at all. If IASC was a person, one would be tempted to say that IASC looks pale and needs serious diagnosis and medical prescriptions.

As stated by Erling and Sanjeev, the IASC started primarily as a network of various social science re-

searchers (including economists) with an interest in natural resources, and few natural scientists that had an interest in people. Indeed, over the years the Association has seen its membership grow and become more diverse due to varying stakeholder interest and backgrounds. Of late it has been observed that the IASC membership has greatly shifted from being research oriented to practitioners, organisational representatives and policy-makers. On one hand, this diversity of membership and participation of such members at the biannual conferences provides a perfect platform for the researchers to bounce off their research findings and get feed back from the practitioners, while at the same time providing valuable information to the policy makers. After all the whole purpose of research is to create knowledge and provide information to the practitioners. While on the other hand, regardless of this diversity, IASC should still remain focused and concentrate on its original objectives, whereby, research comes first.

The future of IASC looks bleak as the analysis of attendance to the last few conferences indicate the presence of a substantial “floating” membership and an increasing number of young researchers, junior faculty members and “free riding” old members. The situation is exacerbated by the appearance on the international scene of new streamlined associations that have taken up interests and topics that are similar to those of IASC and have the potential to absorb the young and upcoming researchers as they build up their career paths.

It is the sprouting up of these new networks (such as Association for Evolutionary Economics; Association of Environmental and Resource Economists, etc) that will in the long-run erode the pivotal role that IASC plays in the study of the commons if nothing is done to protect IASC.

The analysis of attendance to the conferences also reveals the existence of a window of opportunity that could be utilised to promote or enhance capacity building among researchers in the study of commons. This is the appearance of foundations and donor organisations that support large policy and practice-based projects, especially in developing countries, which are relevant to IASC’s goals. These organisations could be used to facilitate the nurturing of the young and innovative

researchers to remain in their fields of research that will contribute to the IASC's goals.

It is tempting at this stage to relate what is happening with IASC to what happens with an "open-access" commons. IASC has practically displayed the concept of open-access commons and its consequences, considering the fact that its membership has been open to all. However, this does not mean that IASC will go down the drain the Hardin way. There is a lesson that can be learnt from an article Feeny, Berkes, McCay and Acheson wrote in 1990 titled "The Tragedy of the Commons: Twenty-Two Years Later". In the article, they disagreed with Hardin and said the "tragedy" may start, but the outcomes will not always be the same. They further criticised Hardin by saying that his theory overlooked cultural factors, which would influence these resource users to come together after several years of declining resources, to seek ways on how to control the decline, and agree upon a set of rules of conduct, that would effectively limit exploitation. This is indeed the case with IASC now, the tragedy may have started, but the people like Erling and Sanjeev have noticed it and are flagging the problem to alert other members of the potential tragedy.

In my view, I feel this is the right time to seriously start thinking on what needs to be done to avoid the tragedy. As Erling and Sanjeev put it, it may be an unduly pessimistic scenario to some readers, but I find this to be one of the diagnostic features of the IASC sickness that calls for attention from all members. This response essay is meant to echo the concerns raised in the main article, and emphasize the need for IASC to focus on its original goals of research while at the same time providing a forum for the dissemination of research findings to various stakeholders.

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Commons Forum *Response*

'RETURN OF THE NATIVE' / OUR ASSOCIATION WAS...

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*"What's in a name? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet."* [Shakespeare :
Juliet to Romeo]

How remarkably seamless this world could be, if only Shakespeare's words were true. However, we now know better, or perhaps worse. Names can spell tragic divides, not only between tribal peoples of yore, but perhaps even more vehemently today in so-called civilised societies. As a senior member of the IASC, and a participant in its growth over ever since its inception, I do not anticipate such drastic consequences over the loss of a single letter, but I would like to sound a note of discontent. After a long period of trying to shift from active research to a position of lobbying for rights in common property, the change in name provokes a feel of 'take-over' and a soft push along the path to being marginalised. Is something more going on than is apparent at present, or should we be confident that the *IASC* is all that the *IASCP* was, and perhaps more?

Let us see. The *IASCP* had indeed "pioneered a new area of cross-disciplinary research," as Erling and Sanjeev say, but, as an economic historian, I know that the *IASCP* collectively *extended* the frontier of common-property research, which has its roots in the second half of the nineteenth century. Sir Henry Sumner Maine, a scholar of comparative history and jurisprudence in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, drew scholars from different disciplines and from both sides of the Atlantic into a discourse and debate about customary law and common property. Key to these deliberations was the village community. The contribution from academic research was enriched by those officials who helped govern the colonies of imperial Europe. At a time when communications were through handwritten letters, one can gauge the serious involvement of the discus-

sants, all scholars of great repute in their times, who included: Henry Morgan from USA, Erwin Nasse and Georg Maurer from Germany, Fustel de Coulanges from France, Emil de Laveleye from Belgium and Haxt Hausen from Russia and still later Paul Vinogradoff.

Further, the IASCP, true to its origins, set out to study with none of the strict formality of any one discipline, through all the “memorable international and regional conferences”, as Erling and Sanjeev point out. On a personal note, I can never forget the very first meeting in 1990 at Duke University, where the atmosphere was one of a dispersed family being united, and for me every name in the first list of members acquired a face. Through the next several international meets there remained this sense of a family reunion, even if the location was in Arctic Bodo! All this was bound to change as the IASCP “consistently broadened and diversified its membership base. And, in the process, it has probably helped to nurture a new breed of young professionals.”

Consequently, as Erling and Sanjeev point out, as our “association broadens its scope and size, it also expands its heterogeneity”. This is good, but could it also be that the very success of the IASCP, in keeping with its eclectic and boundary-free roots, attracted a range of individuals and organisations whose expectations were beyond the agenda of the IASCP? As a result, the word ‘common’ used in ‘common property’ became emphasised, and introduced a plurality of meanings. What can be the consequence of this? An interesting discussion of this point comes from Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations I: “Consider for example the proceedings that we call ‘games’, I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all? - don’t think, but look! - Look for example at board-games, with their multifarious relationships. Now pass to card-games; here you find many correspondences with the first group, but many common features drop out, and others appear. When we pass next to ball-games, much that is common is retained, but much is lost. ... Or is there always winning and losing, or competition between players? Think of patience. ... the result of this examination is: we see a complicated network of similarities overlapping and criss-crossing: sometimes overall similarities, sometimes similarities of detail.”

Rather as a group of chess players may not be able to relate to a group of football players in discussing the

important elements of their game, has the loss of the unifying theme of ‘property’ meant that the IASC now lacks a common identity? Without being able to relate to each other, researchers will speak past one another, and not be in a position to have meaningful discussions. And as the senior researchers retire and withdraw, will there remain a theoretical basis across all the groups of the IASC, to tie the membership together?

For these reasons, I wonder if dropping ‘property’ may not act as a wedge, where there was no disciplinary boundary in the IASCP? Let me explain. “Property” does not only signify *claims*, but also has a corresponding *obligation*. The balancing of obligations with claims was, and continues to be, central to village communities associated with natural and other resources. These obligations are reflected in land tenure. There is thus an aspect of “human order” (Vincent Ostrom) in organising and governing resources. Decisions based on consensus have been the weapons of the weak and have often resisted a “tyranny of the majority”. When such order is self initiated and sustained for more than a thousand years, as in Europe and certain countries of the Indo-European language communities, surely there are lessons worthy of research? This perception is shared by others in the field. For example, last year, Barbara Neis’s essay about fisheries in Canada had a title “need for historical knowledge for using current knowledge”. In other words, context is of the essence. So, when we drop the “property” from the title of the association which studies the commons, are we not perhaps demoting the key importance of associated human ingenuity to organise and govern?

When we made the change we lost a “focal point”, and perhaps have weakened practitioners in the field; and here begins the marginalisation process. Owen Lynch hinted at this in his essay. As a lobbyist-researcher, I see my moorings to the IASCP as having come loose, leaving me adrift. As a researcher of CPRs in India, I must obtain records of customary usage from the past centuries to bolster legislative recognition for the protection of rights of pasture of pastoral people, both within and outside forests, and now we are confronted with an obligation to prove that the pastures were indeed *common property*! Without the proof, the commons stood wide open for State acquisition. The contemporary situation lacked protection which only historical precedent could provide.

To put it another way, apart from the key issue of “continuity and marginalization of parts of the membership,” the name change poses a certain danger of demotion of both historical heritage and associated wisdom. There is a sense of shifting our research priorities *away* from critical issues of livelihoods of inhabitants in the developing world, to whom dependence on common property resources both inside villages and in the forests makes a difference between life and death. Researchers and practitioners have often come with great hope to our conferences. It is not enough to hope we will make it all up when we return to our roots in village common lands, which incidentally still *is* common property, at the next conference in Gloucester in 2008!

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Commons Forum *Response*

A Fundamental Re-thinking of Our Association is Needed ...

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The IASC is indeed a remarkable association; and it has been quite successful. Established with the modest goals of encouraging exchange of knowledge and experience among disciplines, between scholarship and practice, and promoting appropriate institutional design, it ended up contributing to the establishment of a new field of study on the commons. An unmistakable mark of the Association’s success is the mainstreaming of its flagship themes and topics in professional conferences and disciplinary associations, including economics.

In the process, the Association has also managed to retain so much of the openness, collegiality and vitality that have characterized its meetings and events from its earlier years. Pre-biennial meeting workshops focusing on selected topics and analytical techniques have been among the major attractions for the Association’s growing and increasingly diverse membership. In addition to the substantive content and analytical tools they provide,

these workshops have also been important forums for face-to-face networking, mentoring and mutual learning for young researchers and new comers to the field. Along with the meetings, these serve as mechanisms for developing new cohorts of commons scholars and practitioners, in effect seeding emergent “wiki” communities interested in commons issues. The Association’s electronic publications and discussion forums provide ready access to substantive content and facilitate continuing exchanges within sub-groups on topics of common interest within sub-groups.

But success comes with inherent tensions and challenges. Goals and milestones reached are also occasions for pause and reflection — to scan the horizon for the next milestone, revisit old goals, or test new ways of getting there. For the Association, this is a moment of such reflection. Berge and Prakash describe some of the challenges now facing the Association. They point to factors, especially donor funding, which drive the changing composition and dynamics within the Association’s membership. They raise concerns about the waning ranks of core academic researchers, the shifting balance towards practitioners and applied research project staff, and wonder if the latter group can fill the gap created by the former. They also worry about the potential migration of innovative young researchers to other associations and conferences, and contemplate the prospect of being seen as, and indeed of becoming, an aging Association among fresh networks in the expanding field of commons research.

The challenges to the Association are real, but the scenario Berge and Prakash paint is perhaps too gloomy if not tinged with a hint of nostalgia. Their scenario glides past some bright spots that cradle the seeds of the Association’s future vigour and reinvention. Their scenario also does not consider how connectivity, new modes of collaboration and information sharing are rapidly changing the context within which IASC and other associations operate, and the vastly expanded scope for crafting arrangements in which vital research expertise and talent for innovation can be shared to mutual advantage. Within this evolving context, and as commons research becomes increasingly mainstream, the Association needs to reposition and reinvent itself. The Association would have to anticipate next generation

issues pertaining to the commons and carve out a new niche at the leading edge.

The enterprise of theory and knowledge generation is increasingly being organized through mass collaboration, open sharing, non-hierarchical peer exchanges and collective action involving scholars and practitioners, certified experts and novices alike. The basic elements of these configurations already exist within the Association. These include current members, cohorts of workshop alumni, “free riders”, one-time meeting participants and supporters. These “floating” elements can be harnessed to form a stronger base for a rejuvenated, reinvigorated Association of the future.

In this scenario, the Association’s diverse membership and extended network and the rich pool of perspectives and knowledge they represent are likely to be even more important future sources of strength and competitive advantage. A welcoming and nurturing environment will be key to recruiting, engaging and drawing back time and again members to lend their creative energies and capacities to the Association. Professional, discipline-based associations are less able to provide both the interesting blend of perspectives and environment that have been strong selling points of the Association.

Broader trends in the way knowledge is generated, shared and validated are also blurring dividing lines between academic researchers as generators of theory and knowledge on one hand, and practitioners as users and field implementers on the other. Recruitment of academic researchers and investment in the development of talented young researchers will be necessary to fill gaps created by retiring core researchers and to maintain a critical mass of their expertise within the Association. Part of the gap could also be filled by reaching out to established researchers in other networks and associations with complementary strengths and interests. Collaboration with such associations and networks could mobilize needed theoretical expertise on topics of common interest or pioneer work to address jointly defined novel research agendas.

However, this mode of operation would likely require broadening the Association’s focus and framing of commons-related questions in ways that could attract

fugitive research expertise and motivate other associations to collaborate. Collaborative activities could include, for example, co-organizing workshops and conferences, joint publications or shared awards for research on jointly defined seminal topics. The substantive outcomes and the issues surfaced through such activities could create new niches and provide fodder for the IASC’s future lines of work.

Funding will continue to be an issue, but this will not be unique to the Association. The difficulty of raising funds especially for secretariat operations is a perennial problem and for which there are no easy solutions. Creative and more vigorous fund-raising would be more fruitful if the Association offers new knowledge products, fresh research on cutting edge issues, or novel twists to longstanding topics of critical importance. Collaboration with energetic new associations could lighten the burden of resource mobilization. Repackaging and adding value to pre-meeting workshops might pay dividends. Incremental innovations to the IASC meeting design, such as more open space formats, could make for more stimulating, less forgettable sessions.

However, prior to the repackaging and fund-raising pitch, a more fundamental rethinking needs to happen. The Association needs to rearticulate its goals and redefine its niche in an increasingly populated field of commons research. The Association now pauses to ponder the possibilities as it scans the horizon and gathers new energy for the exciting times ahead.

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RECENT PUBLICATIONS

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Books

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Send Letters and Announcements to Alyne Delaney, Editor, Commons Digest, The Institute for Fisheries Management, North Sea Center, PO Box 104, DK-9850, Hirtshals, Denmark. ad@ifm.dk Tel: 45 98 94 28 55 Fax:: 45 98 94 42 68

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IASC North American Regional Meeting Corner Brook, Newfoundland

REMINDER

This is a reminder that abstracts for the North American regional meeting of the IASC, being held in Corner Brook, Newfoundland this summer, are due.

Post-conference field trips have been set and we have a **March 30 deadline for a 4-day field trip to the Great Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland**. We have a limited number of spots available for this trip and are now accepting field trip payment along with online conference registration <http://www.swgc.mun.ca/iasc2007/registration.asp>. This trip is available on a first-come, first-served basis, so if you are interested in signing up for it, please make sure you do it soon.

More information on the field trips is included below.

If anyone has questions, please contact me any time (mrudd@swgc.mun.ca).

Murray Rudd
Conference Chair

Conference Announcement

People and the Sea IV: Who Owns the Coast?

The Centre for Maritime Research
(MARE)
Amsterdam, the Netherlands
5-7 July 2007

As coastal populations and economies expand and the use of marine and coastal resources intensifies, governance has become an issue of key concern.

In the past decades, international gatherings have recognized space (such as the Law of the Sea) set new policy agendas (such as for integrated coastal zone management) and acted to protect key resources (such as by establishing marine parks and Ramsar sites).

This has altered the ownership and the distribution of rights to resources at local and national levels. Who wins and loses as regimes of resources allocation shift? How can competing claims and objectives be recognized and balanced in governance?

Such questions are addressed in four conference themes:

1. Governance
2. Space & Ownership
3. Culture & Work Worlds
4. Innovation in Research Approaches

Keynote Speakers

Daniel W. Bromley

Anderson-Bascom Professor of Applied Economics of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, USA

Bonnie J. McCay

Professor in the Department of Human Ecology, Rutgers University, USA

Yoshiaki Matsuda

Professor in the Faculty of Fisheries, Kagoshima University, Japan

For more information, see

http://www.marecentre.nl/people_and_the_sea_4/index.html

Call for Panels, Papers and Posters

IASC 2007 North American Regional Meeting

Transitions in Defining and Utilizing North American Commons

Sir Wilfred Grenfell College

Memorial University

Corner Brook, Newfoundland

July 31 - August 3, 2007

Conference Themes

- Societal vision, goals, and objectives regarding the Commons and human well being;
 - Expanding conceptions of the Commons, including the 'New Commons';
 - Reducing conflict, improving management, and increasing efficiency in traditional natural resource (e.g., fisheries, forestry, agriculture, wildlife, water) sectors;
 - Out-migration and eroding human/social capital in resource-dependent rural regions;
 - Global benefits versus local costs – sustaining local and regional stewardship capacity;
 - Global costs versus local benefits – mitigating the external costs of local resource use;
 - International institutions and the Commons (e.g., Kyoto Protocol, NAFO, NAFTA);
 - Globalization and market pressures on North American common pool resources;
 - Aboriginal perceptions, goals, and governance issues in North American Commons;
 - Theoretical and methodological advances in Commons research;
 - Commons research – making the transition from information to public policy; and
 - Resource management and challenges in Newfoundland and Labrador (e.g., fishery collapses, rural out-migration, sealing, tourism development, hydroelectric development).
-

Conference Proceedings

All abstracts and submitted papers will be made available online. All conference paper submissions will be peer reviewed and successful papers will be published in full in an edited conference volume.

Panels, Workshops, Directed Discussions

Submit an abstract to organize a 1.5 hour concurrent panel session (3 to 4 speakers and session chair), workshop (a practically-oriented session with 2 or 3 speakers, session facilitator, and sufficient time for audience questions), or directed discussion (a facilitator(s) stimulates audience participation on a particular topic). Abstracts should be a maximum of 350 words and include names and affiliations of the organizer and individual presenters.

Abstracts for panels, workshops and directed discussions are due **February 16, 2007**. Confirmation of acceptance will be sent by March 9. Panel session presenters will need to submit an abstract for their individual papers by March 23.

Individual Papers

Submit an abstract to give a 20-minute oral presentation. Abstracts should be a maximum of 250 words. Include the name, title and affiliation of each author. Abstracts will be peer reviewed and are due **March 23, 2007**. Confirmation of acceptance of the abstract will be sent by April 27, 2007. **Final papers are due June 22, 2007** (details will be sent to authors upon abstract acceptance).

Posters

Submit an abstract to present a poster. Abstracts should be a maximum of 250 words. Include the name, title and affiliation of each author. Posters can be used to present research results, case studies, or provide information about practitioner initiatives relating to the management of the Commons. Poster abstracts are due **June 22, 2007**.

Submission of Abstracts.

All abstracts must be submitted electronically in Word, text, or pdf format.

Abstracts should be submitted to:

Conference Chair, **Murray Rudd**, via email
mrudd@swgc.mun.ca

Conference Announcement

ESEE 2007: Integrating Natural and Social Sciences for Sustainability

UFZ - Centre for Environmental Research

Leipzig, Germany

5-8 June 2007

The European Society for Ecological Economics (ESEE) is pleased to invite you to join us in Leipzig, Germany for the 7th biennial international conference of the European Society for Ecological Economics: 5-8 June 2007. http://www.esee2007.ufz.de

Keynote speakers will include: Elinor Ostrom, Malte Faber, Dick Norgaard, Inge Røpke, Clive Spash, and Carl Folke

The conference will explore contemporary scientific approaches for incorporating the concept of Sustainable Development in research and practice, with a particular focus on the bridging of contributions from the natural and social sciences. It will address a broad range of sustainability topics including loss of biodiversity, human vulnerability to global change and water problems on all geographical and institutional levels.

The aim of the conference is to contribute to a better understanding of societal and natural processes and their interaction through the integration of different scientific methodologies, in order to overcome shortcomings associated with single- and multi-discipline approaches.

Impediments to inter- and trans-disciplinary research will be examined and new research approaches for addressing sustainability questions will be identified.

Registration for ESEE 2007 is now open! http://www.esee2007.ufz.de/participationregistration.html

PhD Student and Early Stage Researcher Workshop, 3-5 June 2007, Leipzig

Ahead of the seventh ESEE conference in Leipzig Germany, a special two and a half day workshop will be organized by and for PhD students and Early Stage Researchers. The objectives of this workshop are three fold: (1) strengthen the European Ecological Economics student network (2) expand students' perspectives on interdisciplinary science and the future of Ecological Economics, (3) provide a forum for students to share experiences and stimulate collaboration.

The programme includes lectures by Prof. Richard Norgaard, Dr. Sigrid Stagl and Dr. Martin Drechsler and a field trip in the vicinity of Leipzig. To apply for a place at workshop contact Esteve Corbera (estevecorbera @ telefonica.net). For more information contact Kate Farrell (katharine.farrell @ ufz.de)

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