The UK Systems Society International Conference 2023

St Hilda's College, Oxford, UK
14-15 September 2023

Systems: Transition to a sustainable World

System - A set of interconnected parts named and embodied within a boundary that, for us, forms a meaningful whole: something which, taken together has meaning for us

Transition - The action or process of passing or passage from one condition, action, or (occas.) place, to another (shorter Oxford dictionary)

Sustainable - causing, or made in a way that causes, little or no damage to the environment and therefore able to continue for a long time (Cambridge dictionary)

World - Natural environment - a place of settlement

The need for a transition to a more sustainable world is widely accepted but it cannot be assumed that understanding what sustainability is, is a given. Isolated efforts to tackle what are perceived to be key issues do not always yield anticipated outcomes, they may even be counter-productive. What we should recognize is that what we have is a network of interconnected problems, described by Ackoff as systems of problems or 'messes'. To make sense of these messes we need to adopt a holistic perspective. Systems thinking provides the intellectual framework and systems practice the lessons which enriches the theory. The conference is designed to promote and capitalise upon such thinking and will provide examples of how these ideas might contribute to sustainability.

Keynote Speakers

Rodney Irwin, Chief Operating Officer (COO) and a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) at the World Business Council for Sustainable Development.

Ray Ison is Professor of Systems at the Open University and President of the International Federation of Systems Research.

Brief details of Keynote Speakers

Rodney Irwin, Rodney is Chief Operating Officer (COO) and a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) at the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), based in Geneva, Switzerland. World Business Council for Sustainable Development. WBCSD is a CEO-led not for profit organisation of >200 leading businesses working to accelerate transition to a sustainable world. As COO, Rodney provides leadership of WBCSD's enabling functions (Finance, HR, ICT and Facilities), and is responsible for WBCSD's corporate governance and statutory duties as the Company Secretary. He also leads the WBCSD education program, for which he manages the organisation's relationships with key education partners Rodney is engaged in researching system change in decision making, disclosure and assurance. He holds Advisory and Academic positions with the following: Council Member: International Integrated Reporting Council (IIRC); Professor of Accounting and Sustainability, Leuphana University, Germany; Lecturer at Yale School of Management, USA and Research Fellow at Lancaster University Management School, UK.

Ray Ison, became Professor of Systems at the Open University (OU) in 1994. He is a member of the Systems Thinking in Practice (STiP) program involved in researching and teaching, particularly team co-authoring and presenting Post-Graduate modules such as 'Managing Change with Systems Thinking in Practice' and 'Evidencing Systems Thinking in Practice'. These are developed and presented within the OUs MSc and Systems Thinking Practitioner Apprenticeship awards. He has also led and/or contributed to a range of major research, scholarship and teaching programs and projects as part of the Applied Systems Thinking in Practice (ASTiP) Group. His research and scholarship span the biophysical and social and is primarily interdisciplinary, international and collaborative. He is recognised for his work on *systems praxeology* and *social learning* within rural development, sustainability management, systemic governance and the design and enactment of learning systems, Prof. Ison is the current President of the IFSR (International Federation for Systems Research); he has also served as President of ISSS (International Society for the Systems Sciences) and as a Trustee of the American Society of Cybernetics. In 2022 he was

given a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Systems Society of India 'for contributions to the transformation of society with a systems approach.

Papers are invited to contribute to the following streams:

- Sustainability research - what can Systems offer?
- Barriers to change – how can systems thinking/practice help overcome them?
- Methodologies -evaluating system methods for intervention and transition
- Cross disciplinary research -the contribution of Systems to interdisciplinarity
- Knowledge Transfer-continuity or transformation?
- Power and Accountability- Systems perspectives
- The question of scale and transition – spatial and chronological
- Policy making and its impact upon the process of transition
- Food Systems and their impact upon Healthy diets • The NHS -A system to…?
- Sustainable Systems in Business

Details of participation and submissions:

- Abstracts: from **4th May 2023**.
- Close for abstracts/submissions: **30th June**
- Review of submissions by **30th July**
- Revised submissions/full papers **31st of August**.
- Conference publication of accepted abstracts **15th September.**
- Publication of proceedings - **January 2024**

Submissions in MS Word

Material should be in word processed form, e.g. Microsoft Word .doc or docx. The font size must be 12 and in Times New Roman, with all figures and tables in a format that will be still legible if

reduced by up to 50%. All materials must conform with the Harvard Referencing System.

Registration guidelines:

The UKSS is a registered educational charity and as such we have endeavoured to keep the registration fee as low as possible to maximize attendance for the two-day event. **£250** including lunch one evening meal and refreshments. Delegates are not constrained to this fee and can increase their contribution to the society should they choose to do so. In such cases a formal acknowledgement of this gift will be issued to the donor. *Students/retirees £125.*
Submissions https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=ukss2023
Presentations will F2F and in plenary. Special dispensation for Zoom based presentations might be considered in special cases but please note the cost of registration remains the same.

Accommodation in Oxford:

There is a limited availability of B &B single rooms which are £82.50+VAT at St Hilda's College, which can be booked direct – Tel: 01865 276888 .
The Best Bed and Breakfast in Oxford - Insider's Oxford (insidersoxford.com)
10 Oxford City Centre Hotels of 2022 (with Prices) (Tripadvisor)
https://www.universityrooms.com/en-GB/
(Rooms in colleges)

The UK Systems Society

The UKSS was formed around 1975 and since then has been actively engaged in advocating and supporting Systems thinking and practice. In 1999 the society was registered as an educational charity and in that guise offers seminars and workshops open to all those who want to learn more about holism and how Systems ideas can help make sense of the many challenges human society faces. These challenges cannot be overcome by approaching them through the traditional disciplinary 'silos' but through

a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach. Systems thinking and practice is the very apotheosis of interdisciplinarity. The society has hosted conferences since the mid 1980's held at different universities across the United Kingdom, latterly because of the restrictions caused by Covid 19 pandemic, these have been 'hybrid' a mixture of physical and virtual participation. For several years several highly successful conferences were held at St Anne's college Oxford, next year the conference, its 23rd , returns to traditional face to face attendance hosted at St Hilda's college Oxford (https://www.st-hildas.ox.ac.uk). The Society owns the journal *Systemist* (www.thesystemist.online) in which fully refereed papers are published from a variety of topics across the disciplines in two issues per year. The journal is managed by academics from the Systems community. Copies of the journal are lodged with the British library each year.

The UKSS supports the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations (see https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/news/communications-material/).