

Editorial

Reflective Practice

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INTRODUCTION

One of the objectives in publishing *Ecology and Society* is to create a scholarly bridge that links the theory and practice of sustainability. That objective is based on the notion that theory and practice mutually reinforce each other. Most practice is based on a set of theories. Sometimes those theories are explicit. For example, practices of optimal harvest or sustainable development are firmly rooted in concepts of a logistic population model and accompanying notions of system stability and equilibrium. However, the connection in the other direction, i.e., between practice and theory, has traditionally been ignored, to the detriment of both. A phrase that describes this linkage is “reflective practice.” We use the word “practice” to describe the implementation or execution of an idea, plan, or theory. It is reflective because the practice is structured as much to challenge derivative theories as to meet other social objectives. It is the process of reflection that provides the basis for learning, adapting, and creating new theories and practice.

This issue is full of articles on reflective practice. We describe those articles below, but first we would like to reflect on the practice of this journal. As we close the 12th volume, we thought it would be useful to report to you some statistics about the journal. It is widely read. The number of subscribers remains at about 12,000. These subscribers are spread across 132 countries, with the majority located in North America. The number of Web site visits increased this year compared with last year, and during 2007 the journal was accessed by 60,000 to well over 160,000 visitors per month. We can also finally report that *Ecology and Society* is completely indexed by ISI, with an impact factor in 2006 of 3.2. In the June editorial we discussed other ways to evaluate the journal’s impact, but this impact factor is important to many who submit manuscripts. This ranking places us among the top interdisciplinary environmental journals.

Another reflection on the practice of *Ecology and Society* is the annual award given for the article that best integrates ecology and society as well as theory and practice. The winner of that award is described in the next paragraph.

THE SCIENCE AND PRACTICE AWARD FOR 2007

The Science and Practice of Ecology and Society Award for 2007 (SPES 2007) was awarded to the Shimshal Nature Trust of northern Pakistan. The 14 nominations we received for the SPES 2007 competition were evaluated by a committee consisting of Marco Janssen, Tun Myint, and Ashok Regmi. Many of the nominations were very promising and interesting, but the committee found that the Shimshal Nature Trust provided a compelling story of a long-term commitment to ecosystem management by a community that, in so doing, enhanced its own social resilience. As discussed in the paper by [Abibi-Habib and Lawrence \(2007\)](#), this indigenous institution emerged from the fortunate conjunction of the scholarly interests of a variety of disciplines. About 20 years ago, several Japanese universities collaborated on the development of an environmental education program that focused on monitoring different ecological variables in the area. This activity increased the environmental awareness and capacity of the younger generation of the local inhabitants, who were instrumental in the creation of the Shimshal Nature Trust in 1997. Their objectives were to continue the social processes of learning and capacity building and to address some of the ecological challenges they were facing, in particular those posed by the creation of a national park and the building of a new road that made this once isolated area considerably more accessible. The story of the Shimshal Nature Trust shows the importance of long-term capacity building to enhance both social and ecological resilience.

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THIS ISSUE

Contributions to special features, all of which address some facet of reflective practice, dominate this issue with more than 20 of the 42 published articles. The present issue includes [Dave Egan's \(2007\)](#) guest editorial for the special feature [Conservation and Restoration of Old Growth in Frequent-Fire Forests of the American West](#), whose eight articles provide a multifaceted examination of old growth in fire-adapted forests in the western United States and the challenges this reflective practice entails.

Three special features in progress analyze sustainability in forestry. One special feature, [Do We Need New Management Paradigms to Achieve Sustainability in Tropical Forests?](#), contributes not only new management paradigms for tropical forests but also propositions for new approaches and new research directions. The feature [Crossing Scales and Disciplines to Achieve Forest Sustainability](#) uses various approaches to integrated modeling and derives new insights from empirical work on the ground. A new article in [Navigating Trade-Offs: Working for Conservation and Development Outcomes](#) provides a historical account of the drivers of and challenges to the sustainable use of tropical forests in Malinau, Indonesia, which are currently undergoing extensive oil palm expansion ([Boedhihartono et al. 2007](#)).

The published articles in the special feature [Social Learning in Water Resources Management](#) draw on the experiences of water and river basin management in a European context and stress the need for collaborative governance and sustainability learning. This important feature is nicely complemented by the articles in [New Methods for Adaptive Water Management](#), which deal with subjects such as transitions management. All these articles contribute valuable knowledge and new insights to the theory and practice of sustainability.

In the research section, the articles cover examples of management from around the globe. [Plummer and Armitage \(2007\)](#) discuss lessons learned from attempts to practice adaptive co-management. [Ortega-Huerta and Kae Kral \(2007\)](#) relate land ownership regimes in Mexico to biodiversity and spatial patterns. [Yandle \(2007\)](#) explains how mismatches of property rights can cause problems with the management of marine resources in New Zealand. [Suyanto et al. \(2007\)](#) argue that poor farmers who provide environmental services through their

activities in state-owned forests should be rewarded with land rights to help alleviate poverty. [Isaac et al. \(2007\)](#) demonstrate the role of informal networks in spreading knowledge and adaptive management approaches.

The synthesis articles cover a wide range of topics from collaborative management to scholarly networks to the evolution of rigidity to locust control in post-Soviet Union territories. [Muñoz-Erickson et al. \(2007\)](#) evaluate how indicators of ecosystem health and collaborative management can contribute to the attainment of societal goals. [Marco Janssen \(2007\)](#) updates a previous article on scholarly networks in the human dimensions of global environmental change, with a focus on vulnerability, resilience, and adaptation. [Houde \(2007\)](#) considers challenges to co-management in Canada, and [Toleubayev and Jansen \(2007\)](#) describe how collective action to control locusts re-emerged in Kazakhstan. [Scheffer and Westley \(2007\)](#) discuss the evolutionary basis of rigidity in a wide range of systems from cells to societies.

The five insight articles in this issue focus on collaboration in teaching, research, and practice. [Morse et al. \(2007\)](#) examine the obstacles and opportunities gained from their experiences in attempting to conduct interdisciplinary graduate student research. [Cooper et al. \(2007\)](#) demonstrate how the involvement of citizens can help conservation practices in urban settings. [Lemos et al. \(2007\)](#) have a marvelous article titled "Developing Adaptation and Adapting Development." [Nick Winder \(2007\)](#) outlines a provocative systems model that incorporates issues related to innovation and metastability. [Parrado-Rosselli \(2007\)](#) describes how indigenous communities collaborated to improve the availability of natural resources in regions of the Amazon.

In summary, we close the 12th year of the journal with a reflection of thanks. We thank the Resilience Alliance for its commitment to and support of a high-quality, open-access journal. We thank the subscribers for their interest and use of the material published in the journal. We can only humbly thank the editors and reviewers whose hard work propels the journal. We also thank the journal staff, especially Michelle Lee, who works behind the scenes to make everything flow in a marvelously transparent way. Finally, we are grateful to our contributors for sharing their collective wisdom and thoughts, thus enriching all of us.

Responses to this article can be read online at:
<http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol12/iss2/art40/responses/>

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