

CHRONICLE

Report on the Eleventh International Conference on Environmental, Cultural, Economic, and Social Sustainability

22–23 January 2015, Copenhagen

The conference organised by the “On Sustainability Knowledge Community” was held in the Scandic Hotel. The knowledge community has organised annual conferences since 2005 and in addition to that, it publishes journals and a book series and an online forum provides the possibility to carry out global discussions about sustainability. It has an interdisciplinary character and so the discussions include the relations of the environment to cultural, economic and social conditions. Community members include academics, teachers, administrators, policy makers, and other education practitioners.

The conferences are held in different locations around the world, each with a specific theme in that location. The special focus for the eleventh conference in Copenhagen was “Sustainability Dividends – Development Fault Lines.” In the description of the conference it was clearly stated that “There is widespread consensus that sustainable development pays dividends for posterity. However, the fault lines in developmental processes call for us to rethink methods and approaches with honesty, transparency and integrity. Deep research needs to inform the nexus between the four pillars of social, economic, cultural and environmental sustainability. New models and modalities of participation need to be scoped and developed.”

The conference program included paper presentations, poster sessions and garden sessions. Topics were as follows: 1. Environmental Sustainability; 2. Sustainability in Economic, Social and Cultural Context; 3. Sustainability Policy and Practice, and 4. Sustainability Education.

The program included plenary, parallel and garden sessions as well as talking circles. Plenary sessions were organised once a day. Each morning invited speakers gave a talk on topics of common interest to address a topic for subsequent conversations. The invited speakers were Jacob HARTMAN from the Municipality of Copenhagen, Olaf GERLACH-HANSEN from the Danish Cultural Institute in Edinburgh, UK, Selina JUUL, founder of the Stop Wasting Food movement in Denmark (Stop Spild Af Mad), Elsebeth GERNER NIELSEN, rector of the Kolding School of Design, from Kolding, Denmark and Amareswar GALLA, Chairperson of the

Sustainability Knowledge Community and editor of the sustainability Journal Collection.

The parallel thematic paper sessions of the first day included Food Security, Role of Religion in Environmental Sustainability, Creating Sustainable Spaces, Natural World and Environmental Theories, Policies and Practice in Sustainable Agriculture, Climate Change and Adaptation, Political Security and Sustainability, Sustainable Agriculture, Environmental Education Programs and Activism, Energy Policy and Practice, Waste and Waste Management, Student Knowledge: Educating for Environmental Sustainability, Sustainable Urban Development, Management, and Perception, The Science and Technology of Environmental Sustainability, Rethinking Sustainability, Urban Sustainability: Development Fault Lines, Community Studies in Economic Sustainability, Community Studies in Economic Sustainability, Endemic Urbanism, Sustainability Policy and Discourse and Economic Theory on Sustainability. The long list shows that various aspects of sustainability were discussed at the conference. I will not go into details about the parallel sessions of the second and third day.

The Transitions to sustainability book launch (“About Transitions to Sustainability: Theoretical Debates for a Changing Planet”) took place at the conference reception. The book contains six thematic sections: culture, systems, business, art, rights, and citizenship providing an important contribution to our knowledge on sustainability and environmental change.

The conference was very interesting presenting various aspects of sustainability. The scope was very broad so that participants could learn a lot from the contributions given by the representatives of scientific research, art, engineering, policy making etc. Lively discussions characterised the whole conference, especially the garden sessions. The next meeting of the community will be organised 21–23 January 2016 at Portland State University on “Urban Sustainability: Inspiration and Solution”.

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