

Establishment of Learning Laboratories for Managing Complex Issues

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In this presentation an outline will be given of the systems approach being used to establish Learning Laboratories (LLabs) in UNESCO/MAB designated Biosphere Reserves around the world and in areas where managers and policy makers have to deal with complex issues. The LLab is a system-based process and methodology for integrated cross-sectoral decision making, planning and collaborations in dealing with complex multi-stakeholder problems. The establishment of a Global LLab NET at The University of Queensland will be discussed and how this NET is using unique and innovative systems processes to develop platforms for collaboration in research and education (including projects for under and postgraduate students and opportunities for Masters and PhD studies). The presentation will focus on the steps for identifying the core issues/leverage points that require systemic interventions (rather than focusing on the symptoms) and how each complex issue is explored through a cyclic process that includes various steps from systems analysis and identification of systemic interventions to implementation and reflection (forming a LLab). While each LLab operates on itself as a management tool, the Global LLab NET facilitates the sharing of ideas, research outcomes and successes or failures of management and policies (systemic interventions) between LLabs from countries with different political systems, cultures, values, etc. Of particular importance is the importance of these interactions that are leading to new levels of learning and subsequently improved management performance at local, regional and global level. In order to maximise this learning, opportunities are being explored to integrate and coordinate the annual Global LLab NET reflection meetings with national and international systems conferences – creating in this way direct links between systems scientists and systems practitioners.