

WEDNESDAY AM WORKSHOP #3 HOLISTIC LAND MANAGEMENT AND SOIL HEALTH RESTORATION

Workshop Session	Holistic Land Management and Soil Health Restoration
Names of presenters	Allan Savoy, Dick Richardson. Pat Richardson was the Moderator
Name of rapporteur	Peggy Mahon

PRESENTER 1

Presenter #1: Allan Savoy, Pioneer in Holistic Management, USA
Title of Presentation Allan had a power point presentation that was sent to the Operations Centre
<p>The <u>Innovative Practice or Strategy</u> that the speaker is presenting.</p> <p>Holistic Decision Making with respect to land management and soil health. Allan used the example on his ranch with using animals and grazing as the main means of soil restoration.</p>
<p>The "<u>Mainstream Practice</u>" the speaker says their strategy is an alternative to.</p> <p>Mechanistic Decision making. One common denominator that lies between all situations where the environment has deteriorated - clearly not culture, technology or any of the many differences - only one common denominator - humans make the decisions that lead to degradation. They have made those decisions based on a number of factors such as past experience, expert opinion, research, intuition, peer pressure, cultural norms, expediency, cost, etc and added to that technology, use of fire, rest, and this had led to mechanistic goals/objectives and "mechanistic decision-making."</p> <p>There are "recognized symptoms of environmental degradation such as : soil erosion, rising frequency and severity of floods and droughts, increased diseases, resource scarcity, etc. There is a "global scientific view" that degradation in Africa is due to overpopulation, overstocking and overgrazing livestock, communal ownership, poverty and no access to capital, lack of education and training, and lack of western extension services and excessive corruption. These "known causes dominate education, environmental thinking, policy and scientific writings. Yet, when compared to Texas where some of the above "known causes" do not exist, the same degradation is taking place. Therefore, Allan has challenged these "known causes" as the reasons for degradation.</p>

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He also explained that humans have been relatively successful at managing “**hard systems**” that are “**complicated**” such as transportation, communication, space exploration, computers, medical technology etc. Where humans have had problems is in managing the “**soft systems**” that are **complex** such as management of forests, economies, human relationships, agriculture, oceans, fisheries, biodiversity loss/desertification/poverty/violence, human organizations, and governance

The Alternative Vision presented by the speaker (i.e. this innovative practice contributes to this vision)

- Holistic Decision-making involves having a holistic focus that drive the process and using “filtering questions” or “testing filters”. It involves using one basic underlying framework (setting goals and objectives), however, the process is different because a holistic focus guides decisions rather than a “mechanistic goal” or process. Allan made the point that although he has used the term “holistic goal” in the past, he now prefers to use the term “holistic focus” because it is broader than a single goal.

This new concept is based on:

- the quality of life that you seek based on what you value most deeply in your life;
- forms of production to ensure you live such a life;
- future resource base (human and land) essential that ensures your descendents can live such lives.

He also suggested a holistic focus to guide decisions rather than a “goal” because it:

- ties your deepest values to your life support system
- you are always moving toward improving your life, business and environment;
- guides your decision-making - like Magnetic North
- ensures that your decisions are in your own enlightened self-interest.

Success Factors: factors that the speaker attributes to the success of their innovative practice or strategy.

- When managing according to a holistic focus, both land and water are restored. Allan has demonstrated this through modelling it in practice.

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Key Challenges: the main challenges the speaker identifies in implementing the strategy

Mainstream scientists and governments did not believe Allan's challenge to their way of addressing the degradation problems. He experienced personal persecution. He has persisted in his belief in an alternative through modelling how it can work in Africa and in Texas.

Overcoming Challenges: the ways the speaker says that challenges have been overcome.

Moving from the Fringe to the Mainstream: the ways the speaker says this work will move from the fringe to the mainstream.

Now over 20 universities are embodying these ideas into their curriculum and "it is staggering how quickly this is catching on." Through teaching/education and through modelling, others can see that this works in practice.

Lessons Learned from this Experience - lessons learned identified by the speaker

- There is hope and a sense of optimism among those who are working on these concepts;
- Allan set out to save wildlife and "hit the tip of a bigger iceberg" and continued to explore what this meant which led to these new concepts;
- The basic decision-making framework works when a holistic focus is your ultimate vision.

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PRESENTER 2

Presenter #2 Dick Richardson University of Texas, Austin Texas
Title of Presentation
The <u>Innovative Practice or Strategy</u> that the speaker is presenting. Using “Discovery Learning” in an academic environment (university setting) to challenge students to think critically about what they are learning. Each student develops a holistic goal related to what they are learning, they are encouraged to try it out and learn from their mistakes. They are graded for “making mistakes and learning from them”, their learning portfolios and for collaborating with each other. In traditional educational settings this would be considered “cheating.” The professors create a “sceptical situation” to challenge students to think critically about what they are learning.
The “ <u>Mainstream Practice</u> ” the speaker says their strategy is an alternative to.
The <u>Alternative Vision</u> presented by the speaker (i.e. this innovative practice contributes to this vision) Changing the template of how students are learning about the environment. Part of this is “investing heartbeats”.
<u>Success Factors</u> : factors that the speaker attributes to the success of their innovative practice or strategy. Getting new ideas across is difficult and it is important to understand that “change is fundamental to managing holistically.” It is important to pay attention to what happens when managing holistically and to be ready to do something different. You need to be ready to ask questions rather than give advice (to students). Change is slow and is made when people are enabled to think independently, therefore it is important to know what accelerates change and transforms individuals and groups. Key success factors are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Having a holistic goal;- Asking questions;- Encouraging independent thinking.

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Key Challenges: the main challenges the speaker identifies in implementing the strategy

- Overcoming resistance to change

Overcoming Challenges: the ways the speaker says that challenges have been overcome

- Dick referred to an article written by Ehrlich and Levin, "The Evolution of Norms" (2005, Pub. Lib. Sci.) which explores how adaptive changes spread and affect populations.
- Dick then discussed different change thresholds (low resistance, high resistance, intermediate resistance to change) and indicated that teaching by asking questions or "discovery learning" creates a situation where there is less resistance to change because then people figure out for themselves what needs to change. They are part of the process.

Moving from the Fringe to the Mainstream: the ways the speaker says this work will move from the fringe to the mainstream.

Lessons Learned from this Experience - lessons learned identified by the speaker

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SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP DISCUSSION

Comment
Question: Do you feed your animals supplements or do they just graze?
Allan: No I bunch the animals (not rotate). It is the planning that is important. The animals have to get to the right place at the right time and for the right reason for this to work.
Question: What about predators?
Allan. We do not kill predators. We put all the animals in predator proof enclosures at night.
Question: Overpopulation? Is this an issue re: soil erosion?
Allan. This would be only looking at an objective not the holistic approach or the holistic goal of including the environment.
Question: Is oil the problem?
Allan. No we would have been in trouble without oil re: global desertification. I advocate nothing today but to change the way that you make decisions about how you are managing your land.
Question: Asked about how to begin in Mexico.
Allan. We are actively working in Mexico training extension workers at the university.
Question/Comment from Participant: Need to promote links between the university and the community.
Question: What were your turning points?
Allan: There were many turning points. What I learned as an academic and in real life were totally different. I cared. That is my critical turning point. I did what I did because I cared and I had to ignore condemnation and abuse.
Question: To what extent do you use "swales"?
Allan. You can't use mechanical ways to holding water - it lowers production on both sides of the swales.
Question: Why are animals so important?
Allan. You need to think of a deciduous tree. It grows, leaves grow, fall to the ground....tree is "grazing itself". Similarly with grazing

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animals - their digestive system breaks down the massive vegetation. Need to increase, not decrease livestock.