

Ecosystems and Sustainable Development V

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Preface

Beyond the specific dimension of the individual, learning is a primary characteristic of life. Shifting our attention to local systems we can consider ecosystems and traditional communities as learning “minds”, according with Bateson’s thought. We call environmental wisdom the explicit knowledge that emerges from long periods of co-evolution of people and nature in local systems, cast in the same lot. Environmental wisdom rises both from trial-and-error and from more subtle kinds of knowledge, involving aesthetic and intuition. It sediments as tradition or religion and deeply contribute to landscapes creation, keeping ecosystems and humans alive together.

In line with this preliminary statement, ECOSUD is not only a forestage to present novel research related to ecological problems from all over the world; it also gives opportunities for new emergent ideas in science arising from the cross fertilization of different disciplines including mathematical models and eco-informatics, evolutionary thermodynamics and biodiversity, structures in ecosystems modelling and landscapes. ECOSUD is a challenge for the creation of a new science in line with Prigogine’s statement that “at all levels we observe events associated with the emergence of novelties and narrative elements, which we may associate with the creative power of Nature”.

It is our belief, that in order to survive, local communities should re-connect themselves with their biological basis. As a first option we need to pay new attention to our boundaries: not to avoid contacts, exchanges or cross-fertilization with other people and other lands, but to retain cultural biodiversity.

Only a network of self-centred communicating communities can provide a sufficient basis of diversity to achieve long-term sustainability. We believe we are living a moment of general crisis, a re-learning transition period that is inherently uncertain, and therefore we have to enlarge our cultural and technological basis, avoiding homogenization as the primary source of fragility.

The Editors
Cadiz, May 2005

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