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THE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES,
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Ashurst Lodge, Ashurst
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C. A. Brebbia

Wessex Institute of Technology, UK

M. E. Conti

University of Rome 'La Sapienza', Italy

E. Tiezzi

University of Siena, Italy

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Preface

This book contains the papers presented at the International Conference on the Management of Natural Resources, Sustainable Development and Ecological Hazards, which was held in Patagonia, Argentina. The Conference name was shortened to 'The Ravage of the Planet' to emphasize the urgency of the problems under discussion.

The state of our planet continues to deteriorate at an alarming rate. We have arrived at a situation where we need to determine urgent solutions before we reach a point of irreversible damage.

Our civilisation has fallen into a self-destructive process whereby natural resources are consumed at an ever-increasing rate. This process has now spread across the planet in search of further sources of energy and materials. The aggressiveness of this quest is such that the future of our planet hangs in the balance. The problem is compounded by the pernicious effect of the resulting pollution.

With these concerns in mind, the Co-Editors of this book decided to call an international conference organised by the Wessex Institute of Technology with the sponsorship of their respective institutions. The concerns were discussed with Dr. Adolfo Perez-Esquivel, Nobel Peace Prize winner, whose courageous defence of human rights extends to the need to stop the violence against our environment. A peaceful and just society is only possible if it is able to achieve a degree of harmony with its environment. The destruction of natural resources and the pollution of the environment will result in increasingly violent confrontations and an unstable world. These arrangements led Perez-Esquivel to support the meeting by accepting an invitation to become its Honorary President.

Much has been written about reaching sustainability in different contexts, but the concept itself needs to be defined within the framework of many different disciplines in order to arrive at optimal solutions. Therefore this conference is essentially a trans-disciplinary meeting in order to find appropriate sustainable solutions, i.e. those involving collaboration across a wide range of disciplines.

Patagonia was selected as the location for the Meeting as it is one of the few unspoilt parts of the planet, now under threat from over-development and exploitation of its many resources. Bringing the region to the attention of the international scientific and learned community may help to highlight new ways in which regions

such as Patagonia can be saved for future generations. The success of the Conference, which is demonstrated by the number and quality of the papers in this book, is a clear demonstration of the importance that our colleagues attach to the environmental and ecological problems threatening our planet. The organisers were pleasantly surprised by the response.

The editors are indebted to many people for the success of the Conference and the quality of the book. Firstly, our gratitude goes to all participants who travelled great distances to Bariloche in order to attend the conference and present the papers contained in this book. Many others helped to make the Conference a reality. Our greatest debt is to Dr. Perez-Esquivel who, by agreeing to be Honorary President, lends credibility to a meeting, which, in the early stages, was difficult to conceive and organise.

We hope that the Conference has fulfilled its main objective, which was to take stock of the present situation and help to formulate constructive proposals and policies for a way forward.

The Editors
Bariloche, Argentina
December 2006

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