



Step Up and Step Out: Building capacity for greater impact addressing climate change and other sustainability issues



Workshop participants and staff. Back row, left to right: Trista Patterson, Anna Jones-Crabtree, Elaine Kohrman, Dominic Stucker, Tim Brown, Beth Sawin, Michaelyn Bachhuber; middle row: John Mlade, Maria Carvajal, Maria Latumahina, Amalia Souza, Josephine Brennan; front row: Any Sulistyowati, Edie Farwell, Agnieszka Rawa, Lynn Stoddard. **Not pictured:** Colleen Bozuwa, Danielle Hirsch, Clemens Kalischer, Jay Mead, Janice Molloy, Sara Schley.

Alumni Workshop Report
September 22-26, 2009
Trinity Conference Center in West Cornwall, Connecticut

A powerful and deeply moving workshop with an exceptional group of alumni Fellows who continue to increase the scope and impact of their sustainability and climate change work by helping to transform large systems across sectors, issue areas, and countries



The purpose of the alumni network New Initiatives program – of which workshops are a core component – is to nurture relationships between cohorts and sectors, learn from Fellows' work and life experiences, design collaborative projects to advance sustainability in multiple sectors and geographical regions, and generate action on specific issue areas, such as climate change.

The vision is to position and support Fellows to be strategic thought leaders, actors, and instigators of significant sustainability measures here in the US, and in other countries where they work. A foundational theme is how to accelerate the sustainability revolution, and how to do so from a place of spirit, compassion, truth telling, love, and integrity.

photographer, videographer, and musician also led sessions and documented the workshop. Fellows came from all three alumni Cohorts, presented their work to one another, and inspired us all by how quickly and well they bonded as one group.

"Feeling part of a wider sustainability movement has brought meaning to both my personal and professional life."

Maria Latumahina, Bandung, Indonesia

At the outset of the workshop, SI staff member Edie Farwell reviewed the main learnings and tools of the Fellows curriculum, including a guided visioning process to ground the intention of each person's focus at the workshop. Revisiting that vision on the last day coupled with a reflective walk through Trinity Conference Center's labyrinth led to

"The 'container' you planned and created as well as the flexibility contributed to deepening and energizing my vision. I feel completely rejuvenated and have reflected frequently on our time together. A very powerful event. I feel very connected to the growth process that we all underwent in a few short days. Amazing... a really key, peak experience for me and for connecting with everyone else."

Elaine Kohrman. Oregon. USA

powerful commitments, action steps, and solidarity between Fellows.

Art, photography, and music

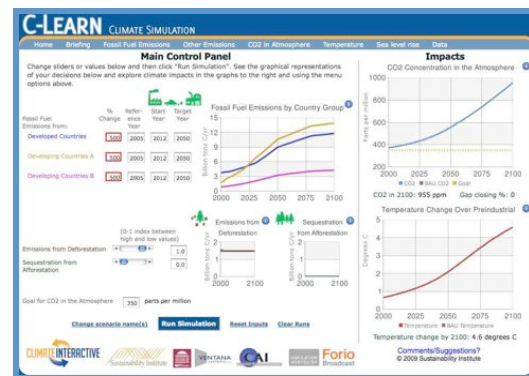
Fellows representing 7 countries and working in government, civil society, business, and philanthropy participated in the Step Up and Step Out workshop held at Trinity Conference Center in West Cornwall, Connecticut. In addition to Sustainability Institute (SI) staff, a guest speaker, artist, writer,

graced the entire workshop with artist Jay Mead leading an afternoon Leadership Earth Art Project to help participants experience systems in nature, observe patterns, and work from a creative influence to balance the intellectual.



Systems, and presented the latest from SI's climate work relating to the UNFCCC meeting in Copenhagen this December. Beth emphasized the important role that SI, partners, and Fellows can play in helping inform global civil society of the "state of the deal" as the Copenhagen process escalates. Through a 4-part exercise on the final morning, Fellows left with commitments and collaboration ideas to contribute to the success of the Copenhagen process.

This resulted in stunning nature art by everyone and moving descriptions of the process and meaning of each piece. Videographer Colleen Bozuwa and photographer Clemens Kalischer documented the session. Songs from Fellow Amália Souza started several sessions and musician Jordan Loder lifted our spirits and inspired us to dance on our last evening together. Fellow Trista Patterson shared a slide show of her photographs of the gathering during our last morning together,



Each participant received a copy of Dr. Donella Meadows' newest book, Thinking in Systems, and discussed how SI's presentation of system thinking has evolved from cohort to cohort. Presentations by Fellows also exemplified how they are applying systems thinking to their own work and lives.

SI staff member Dr. Beth Sawin demonstrated C-ROADS (Climate Rapid Overview and Decision-support Simulator) a climate simulator created by SI, MIT, and Ventana

“The workshop changed how I think about the Donella Meadows Fellowship, from thinking of it as a series of work sessions to a real living and growing network of like minded professionals slowly connecting the dots in their respective efforts towards a bigger picture.”

Agnieszka Rawa, Washington DC, USA

Sara Schley, an expert coach and organizational learning specialist, joined us as a guest speaker to present a Green Planet Action Network initiative that she and other colleagues have been incubating. Her presentation stimulated a lively dialogue about the role of theories of change, vision, scope of systemic change, and emotion in our work.

Throughout the workshop, each Fellow presented on their current work, both successes and challenges, which informed small coaching groups, collaborations and discussion. Fellows left with a coaching buddy, committing to engage in ongoing discussion with one another for at least 4 months. Writer Janice Molloy from Pegasus

Communications joined us to document Fellows' use of systems thinking in their sustainability work for a series of articles.

"This meeting was one of the most important in my life."

Maria Carvajal, Sonora, Mexico.

One evening, SI staff member Dominic Stucker introduced participants to the tool of social network mapping, helpful in visualizing the diversity, relationships, communities of practice, and potential collaborators in a given network. His proposal to apply the tool to the Fellows network was received with enthusiasm and, coupled with a demonstration of mind mapping by Fellow Any Sulistyowati, helped stimulate a moving discussion on next steps for the Fellows network.

"My experience with the Fellows Program and SI has been profound - forever changing the way I think and work."

John Mlade, Georgia, USA.



“Most people are taking great risks - of one form or another - to do sustainability work and I appreciated the mutual support that was so evident at the workshop... I took away a renewed commitment to my work and to my participation in the community of practitioners that the Fellows Program provides.”

Tim Brown, Illinois, USA

edges, and were able to further articulate their “Big V,” “Middle V,” and “little v” visions. Please see chart.

In addition to feedback on the overall design and implementation of the workshop (see boxed quotes), Fellows evaluated

We were especially pleased with the beautiful Trinity Conference Center on the Housatonic River in rural Connecticut, the hospitable staff, and wonderful food. Even on a largely overcast day, the kitchen staff still prepared some of our Welcome African Feast with their newly built solar cookers.

each session in terms of its use and meaning in their personal and/or professional lives. The Fellows presentations, Leadership Earth Art Project, mind mapping, visioning, coaching, climate, and final check-out sessions ranked highest.

Following the workshop, participants completed a detailed evaluation, indicating that desired learning outcomes were met. In particular, Fellows formed relationships across cohorts, felt safe and secure in sharing and engaging their learning

We are grateful for the generous funding for this workshop and other activities from the Stiftung Drittes Millennium and many donations to the Donella Meadows Fellows Scholarship Fund from Fellows, Board members, staff, and public individuals.

