



The 21st International Symposium on Society and Resource Management

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In June 2015, the International Association for Society and Natural Resources (IASNR) held its annual conference, the 21st International Symposium on Society and Resource Management. The conference was held at the College of Charleston in Charleston, South Carolina, the United States of America. The IASNR was formally established in 2001 having already convened many symposia focused on society and natural resources and the establishment of the journal *Society & Natural Resources* (S&NR) which is now in its 23rd year.

The 2015 conference theme was 'Understanding and Adapting to Change'. Most contributions were from across the United States with a number of contributions from Australia and yours truly representing New Zealand. How decisions have been and should be made, how we address resource conflict, shifts in governance, the role of knowledge in decision-making, and adapting to change were important themes that were addressed in many different ways across a range of issues. These issues included natural hazards, wildlife protection, fisheries, forestry, water, energy, air quality and agriculture. Climate change, resilience, and adaptive capacity were issues of concern under discussion.

The most memorable part of the conference for me was a plenary presentation from Queen Quet, Chieftess of the Gullah/Geechee Nation and Director of the Gullah/Geechee Sustainability Think Tank. On a wide stage in an ornate historic theatre in downtown Charleston she talked about her people and her fight for their autonomy, in law, to manage their land and resources. As she told her fascinating story of twists and turns, she put on and took off various pieces of clothing (from traditional shawls to stiletto shoes) from a long table at the front of the stage to illustrate how she had to change and adapt to the political environment that she encountered and navigate her way with her people. It was mesmerising and powerful. Importantly, not a PowerPoint in sight!

I attended as a discussant in a panel session titled 'Water Governance: Boundaries, Collaboration and Conflict'. This session was convened by the editors of S&NR, David A. Sonnenfeld from the Department of Environmental Studies, State University of New York and Peter Leigh Taylor from the Department of Sociology, Colorado State University. Earlier in the year they had called for papers for a special issue on 'Water Crises and Institutions: Governance Challenges in an Era of Uncertainty'. My paper titled 'Reordering water governance in New Zealand: an examination of a hybrid framework of collaboration and statutory force to manage diffuse agricultural pollution in the region of Canterbury' was a finalist candidate for the special issue. Of 120 proposals received from around the world, 16 were selected for consideration. Eight of us travelled to Charleston to present our draft papers. S&NR editors, Peter and David, established the panel session to bring everyone that could attend together to create a special issue that gave authors an opportunity to link with others to strengthen their papers and create a special issue that had cohesion as well as conceptual diversity. In other words, this was an experiment which I found incredibly useful. In the panel session, as well as presenting our papers, we spent the afternoon addressing questions. These related to how governance was addressed in our research, what was the role of the state in water governance and how it had changed, how governance had been shaped by scale, and where was governance heading? My paper is currently moving through the peer review process. Fingers crossed!