Upcoming SRC 10th Year Anniversary

The SRC will be celebrating its 10th year anniversary with an inaugural dinner to be held on Thursday 12 October 2017. Numerous research partners, all SRC alumni and current students, past and present staff and adjuncts will receive an invitation in due course.

Alumni are encouraged to complete the ‘where are they now’ form already emailed to them. This information, together with the SRC’s achievements over the past 10 years will be displayed on the SRC’s webpage: http://www.usc.edu.au/research-and-innovation/sustainability-and-environment/sustainability-research-centre

Reminiscent of old times is an image featuring staff and students in attendance at the very first SRC Annual Retreat.
The last couple of months have been exciting and successful for HDR student, Renee Currenti. This semester has seen the delivery of SUS101 with Renee acting as graduate teaching assistant and tutor, contributing to the teaching of the most recent cohort of students interested in sustainability. It has been a very enjoyable learning experience.

March began with her Masters confirmation. April saw a three-week research trip in Fiji where, along with two other key goals, a pre-research consultation was conducted with the community of Nawairuku in the highlands of Ra Province. It was a short but immensely successful visit to the village to discuss potential research ideas and to build strong working relationships. The time was also extremely valuable as a chance to contextualise her upcoming fieldwork. Renee will be conducting her field data collection from June to August 2017. She will be working together with the community to better understand how it is adapting and responding to changes (climatic and non-climatic) within the village. Renee’s research will also identify factors that aid or constrain adaptation efforts. The short, but sweet visit resulted in a very excited HDR student and a community looking forward to her return.

HDR student, Renee Currenti’s upcoming fieldtrip

Congratulations to Mikayla Cover on being awarded the Vice Chancellor’s Honours Scholarship valued at $5000.

The selection criteria for the award is based on academic merit, research focus and potential alignment to a USC area of research concentration, and motivation for ongoing study/research and pursuit of a Higher Degree by Research.

Mikayla successfully presented her research proposal entitled ‘Social value mapping as a decision support tool in environmental impact assessments: A case study from Sigatoka, Fiji’, to the School of Science and Engineering in March. She recently completed her fieldwork in Fiji, working in collaboration with the Nadroga-Navosa Provincial Council to conduct social participatory mapping. Mikayla is now working to report the findings on iTaukei (indigenous Fijian) use and values of the Sigatoka River estuary.

Pictured to the right: Danielle Rietberg, Roger Kitson, Mikayla Cover, Matthew Brown, Renee Currenti and Dr Tristan Pearce
HDR students present their research at International Conferences


The purpose of her study was to investigate the ontology and social impact of new spiritual memes on evolutionary processes.

The current study provided an analysis of the unique spiritual memeplex inherent to the novel mythology conceived by artist and spiritual leader Oberto Airaudi, founder of the spiritual eco-community, The Federation of Damanhur, Italy. Analysis of Damanhur’s spiritual memes was facilitated through semiotic analysis of selected murals in the expansive underground complex, the ‘Temples of Humankind’. The hypothesis that new Western spiritual memes created in sustainable communities were predominantly moulded by the migration of ideas from East to West was confirmed by visual research methods. The case study illustrated the spatial dimension of the globalisation effects of the migration of memes from East to West; notwithstanding that ideas facilitated by globalisation in the form of cultural imperialism are overwhelmingly flowing in the reverse direction. This trend of westernisation, as an attribute of our post-colonial era, had been investigated extensively in the past few decades, whereas East to West migration of ideas explored by the current study have not been a subject of scholarly research to equal measure. Additionally, migration of ideas at the macro level, analysed through the pendulum theory of social change, integrated the theoretical and empirical approaches of this study to provide a comprehensive multiscalar analysis. The community is presenting an intriguing new collective ‘habitus’ within a loaded cultural context consisting of a proliferation of unique spiritual memes that contain elements associated with a changing sociocultural paradigm.

HDR student, Andrew Venning presented a paper at the Ninth International Conference on Climate Change: Impacts and Responses held in Cambridge, U.K. in April this year. His paper was entitled: ‘Climate change, affordable housing and law: A transdisciplinary theme.’

Building Disaster Resilience One Message at a Time

When severe weather is approaching, flood waters are closing local roads, or bushfires are affecting Sunshine Coast communities, effective information and communication systems play a critical role in building a disaster resilient community. Sunshine Coast Council’s full time Disaster Management Coordinator and part time USC PhD candidate, John Gallina, noted that up to the minute information alerts from Council’s disaster management unit can now be sent directly to phones and smart devices to keep our community up to date with emergency information alerts arising from high impact events.

Everyone is encouraged to subscribe to the free CoastAlert by simply downloading the SCCApp from the AppStore or Google Play, or go directly to Disaster Hub: www.disaster.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au and follow the directions to download the app.
Earthquake – Landslide Interactions: Implications for Sustainability

Major earthquakes cause widespread environmental and socio-economic disruptions that can persist for decades. The shallow-focus 2016 Kumamoto earthquakes triggered widespread landslides west of Aso central volcano cones in Japan. Although most seismic activity occurred in a largely rural area, several villages and many farms were damaged in addition to the landslide disturbances. Most of the landslides initiated on ridgelines and/or convex to planar slopes, but did not mobilize into long runout debris flows. Rather much of the landslide sediment remains on hillslopes or in headwater channels where it can be transported as a damaging debris flow during a future large storm. This situation is exacerbated by future landslides that will likely occur along ridgelines, where large parallel fissures developed during the earthquake promoting rapid ingress of rain water and runoff into these already unstable slopes. Future slope failures and debris flows have the potential to inflict damage on rural communities and the widespread disturbances and destruction of rural roads in the region are already causing elderly farmers to abandon their centuries-old grazing practices placing endangered grass species at risk. Prof Roy Sidle has been engaged in collaborative research in Kumamoto with Japanese colleagues (Prof Gomi, A/P Akasaka, and students) from Tokyo University of Agriculture & Technology, and has recently received an International Collaboration Grant from Kyoto University, Disaster Prevention Research Institute, to investigate the interactions of earthquake-generated fissures and future landslides.

Emerging from the field research trip inside the Aso Caldera

Extensive landslides in grasslands west of Mt Aso

Parallel fissures along a ridgeline generated during the April 2016 Kumamoto Earthquake
Lead Author (Policy Effectiveness chapter) for the Global Environmental Outlook 6th edition

Dr Pedro Fidelman, SRC Adjunct Fellow, has been appointed as a Lead Author (Policy Effectiveness chapter) for the Global Environmental Outlook 6th edition. The Global Environment Outlook is the United Nations Environment flagship integrated assessment on the state of the global environment. It presents the environmental trends for air, climate, water, land and biodiversity. It draws on all the major global assessments from international science panels and UN bodies. The assessment looks at the interactions and feedback loops among social, economic and environmental drivers to assess the effectiveness of different policy responses in moving the world onto a more sustainable pathway. For more information see www.unep.org/geo

Recent Publications

Journal articles


The Sustainability Research Centre

Our niche area for the Sustainability Research Centre (SRC) is societal adaptation—more specifically, understanding the social dimensions of environmental change.

We contribute knowledge to a range of sustainability issues such as coastal management, climate change, and water resources management (recognised as significant at local through to international scales).

The SRC includes over 60 researchers (including 30 PhD students): [Link to website]

Further information:
Gail Wilkins
Tel: +61 7 5459 4891
Email: gwilkin2@usc.edu.au
[Link to website]

Books


