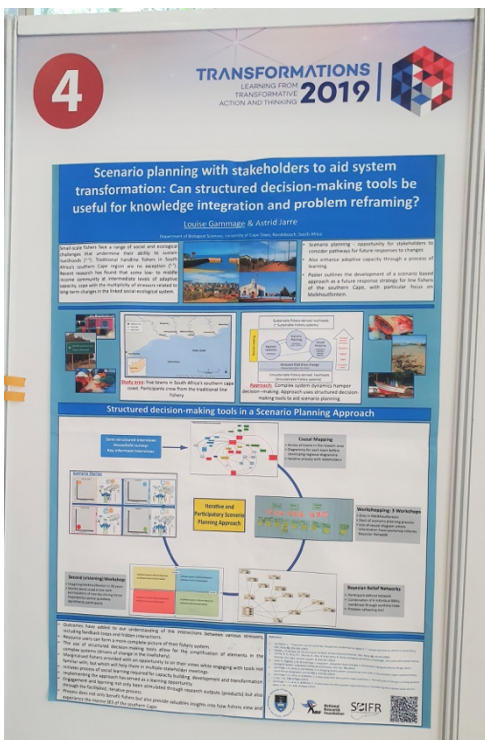


A melting pot of science and art in support of system transformations

Louise C. Gammage



Louise outside the conference venue



Poster presented at the conference

This was an interesting conference, particularly as the conference organisers made a concerted effort to include contributors beyond academia, and specifically with the integration of art into the conference programme. This was most prominent by the inclusion of Chilean musical and

I attended the “[Transformations 2019](#)” conference from 16-18 October 2019, hosted by the University of Chile at the Andrés Bello Campus in Santiago, where I presented a poster overview of my PhD work. I chose to attend this conference as I wanted to expose myself to an audience that may be unfamiliar with my research methods and study sites, and to engage with scholars with whose work I was likely to be unfamiliar with. I expected that this would not only allow me to strengthen my interdisciplinary skills but also extend my professional network, specifically with scholars from South America where there are many opportunities for collaboration, specifically comparative work as the developmental context is similar to that of South Africa.

Welcome to the Transformations 2019 Conference Learning from Transformative Action and Thinking

“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them”

Albert Einstein

The planet is experiencing rapid changes and humans are part of this story, we have built the past and present of the planet, we are responsible, and this responsibility cannot be a driver for inaction, rather a hope for writing the planet's future. What we have done so far is neither sufficient nor timely, we need to be more ambitious and the Transformation approach gives us the opportunity to address this ambition based on new ways of thinking, to image the imaginable and for this we need the participation of all in this journey.

The Transformations 2019 Conference is the fourth in a biennial series and we are very proud to have taken on the challenge of organizing it for the first time in a “Southern Country”. This gives us all the opportunity to learn from different contexts and from different social actors, as the Conference places strong emphasis on going beyond science, to include government organizations, the private sector and civil society to participate actively and engage and interact in innovative formats. Special sessions such as “non-academic sessions”, which are open to the general public, will be led by organizations outside academia who will share their experiences, realities and challenges with scientists who will have the opportunity to directly contribute by using their knowledge to serve society. Transformations 2019 has opened its doors to art, music and how children see the future, serving as inspiration for Transformation. All of this and much more will happen during the Conference.

The Transformations 2019 Conference welcomes new ways of thinking, new ways of relating to each other and in a different context. Transformation is a part of and belongs to each one of us.

Quote by Einstein



Guitarist playing during the plenary

dance items in the plenary sessions. Several non-academic sessions also formed part of the programme.

Interestingly, children from three schools were, prior to the conference, asked to draw pictures of what they imagined the future of the world looked like, and these were on display throughout the conference. The last session was an innovative art session hosted by the Museum of Contemporary Art, convened by scientists from different disciplines including a visual artist and a musician, which included reflections on Transformations and what it means to them.

My poster session took place on the first day of the conference, with the poster on display for the first two days of the conference. The poster session, although not well attended, did offer the opportunity for some interesting discussions, particularly with a colleague from the USA whose work places the focus on psychological aspects related to climate change and transformations.

An important (and exciting) theme emerging from the sessions I attended, was that of the importance of storytelling and narratives in learning. Many participants shared novel methodologies and case studies used to capture narratives and stories. I found the reflections on



Demonstration of storytelling and narratives in learning



Political protest in Chile

these methods particularly interesting because it gave me some great ideas for some

embarking on, and exposed me to a body of knowledge of which I was not aware of. Another interesting aspect that appeared throughout the conference was that of power and the role power imbalances play in the ability of any system to transform (as we are also finding in SCIFR). It was heartening to hear that the issues we struggle with in South Africa are not unique, and also that researchers from all over the world grapple with similar issues. The conference also served to confirm that my research is on track with current trends in my field.