

Preface – Engaging Local Wisdom in the New Millenium

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The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) describes Local knowledge as ‘the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings’. In rural and indigenous communities, local knowledge ‘informs decision making about fundamental aspects of day to day life’ and forms the basis for the various facets of culture in the community including language, social interactions, ritual and spirituality, as well as practices related to use of resources. [1]

This body of wisdom has developed over time and continues to develop. The practical aspects of local knowledge are highlighted by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation through its definition of local knowledge: ‘...the entire system of concepts, beliefs and perceptions that people hold about the world around them. This includes the way people observe and measure their surroundings, how they solve problems and validate new information. It includes the processes whereby knowledge is generated, stored, applied and transmitted to others’. [2]

The fact of these formulations being endorsed by a global organisation like the UN validates and necessitates further study into Local Knowledge, its universal relevance and multi-faceted applications across disciplines and locations. Thus, in the spirit of inclusiveness and inquiry, the Local Knowledge Study Group of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) first embarked on its quest to foreground the study of this transdisciplinary form of knowledge at regional level to serve as ‘a foundation for locally-appropriate sustainable development’ (as succinctly noted by UNESCO) with its inaugural Regional Conference on Local Knowledge in Langkawi, Kedah in 2011. Seven annual conferences and 40 edited books later, the organisers of the (rebranded) International Conference on Local Knowledge (ICLK) 2017 are seeking to disseminate contemporary research findings, built around the theme of “Engaging Local Wisdom in the New Millenium” to a global audience through its first publication of indexed proceedings in SHS Web of Conferences.

The seventh instalment of ICLK was organised by USM on 8-9 May 2017 in collaboration with the Johor State Government through its cultural arm, the *Yayasan Warisan Johor* and supported by *Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka* where 90 papers were presented by local and international participants. The papers in these Proceedings represent a selection of the latest transdisciplinary research that engages with various forms of Local Wisdom in their framework of analysis. The articles have been divided into the following areas, according to thematic focus: Architecture and Conservation, Arts and Crafts, Ecology and Ecosystems, Governance and Policy, Health and Healing, History and Community and finally, Language, Literature and Media.

As guest editor of this volume of selected conference papers, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Scientific Committee, reviewers and contributors for their co-operation and commitment throughout the process of producing this collection of papers. I would also like to record sincere thanks to all parties who participated in the organisation of the 7th ICLK for making the conference a success.

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