Planning under Pressure: an Interactive Approach
Invitation only seminar

Do you struggle to make a reality of planning and strategic thinking when faced by...

relevent pressures for decisions?
ever-changing circumstances?
interwoven responsibilities?
persistent uncertainties?
conflicting interests?
tight resources?

The Integrative Research for Sustainability Group at Environmental Science and Research (ESR) Ltd invites you to attend a seminar with international management expert

Professor John Friend
Stradspan Limited, UK

Hosted in association with the Victoria Management School

Thursday 26 February 2009 from 12 -1pm
Lecture Theatre GBLT 3
Old Government Building - Victoria University of Wellington
Cnr Lambton Quay/Whitmore St - Wellington

Abstract
John Friend will outline the foundations and applications of the Strategic Choice Approach to interactive planning for groups faced with multiple sources of uncertainty – including the political as well as the operational and environmental. He will introduce practical examples to illustrate how this approach can be used in different management settings. Strategic Choice first emerged through research by operational research scientists and social scientists in the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations into the subtleties of strategic decision-making in local government. From this has developed a flexible practice, recognised and applied around the world in the private and public sectors. The process involves facilitating groups of people representing diverse interests to work creatively together in balancing the sources of perplexity they are currently experiencing against the pressures for early commitment. Further details over page ...
Seminar Objective

Professor Friend’s visit to New Zealand has been organised by ESR, which specialises in applied social research and decision-making methods. Insights from the Strategic Choice Approach and related methods are being applied in a 4 year FRST funded project, led by ESR for Plant and Food Research, to understand the social and commercial context for investment decisions for future food technologies. This seminar is aimed at industry, professional, government and community decision-makers, and will also be of wide interest to management and policy scholars.

To confirm attendance RSVP to christine.jenca@esr.cri.nz by Tues 24 Feb.
Biography

John Friend describes himself as now pseudo-retired, after a lengthy operational research career in which his disciplinary roots in mathematics gradually became overshadowed by his growing associations with social scientists, public service professionals and executives, planners, politicians and project co-ordinators. He currently works as a consultant in several parts of the world, while also managing a software business and holding visiting chairs at three UK universities.

After graduating in mathematics at the University of Cambridge, his career included 10 years in management science roles in manufacturing industry and the airline business. For 15 years John Friend led the planning processes group in the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, building up a programme of action research in planning processes which led to the Strategic Choice Approach.

John Friend is associated with an evolving network of people and institutions throughout the world who share an involvement in the application of the Strategic Choice Approach and other participatory planning methods. In 1998, he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Amsterdam, in recognition of his pioneering contributions to the practice and theory of planning under uncertainty.

STRADSPAN is a small independent company, formed in 1990, which supports strategic decisions. Registered in England and Wales, the activities of Stradspan range from the supply of the STRAD (Strategic Adviser) software package, to participation in extensive action research projects working with staff in consulting, academic, governmental and commercial organizations. The company's distinctive competence lies in its flexible and participatory approach to the making of difficult yet often urgent decisions under conditions of uncertainty, complexity and conflicting interests.

The work of Professor Friend is based on developmental decision making, a creative approach which combines the following five points:

- more emphasis on enriching COMMUNICATION than on reinforcing EXPERTISE
- more emphasis on supporting DECISIONS than on investigating SYSTEMS
- more emphasis on managing UNCERTAINTY than on organizing INFORMATION
- more emphasis on sustaining PROGRESS than on producing PLANS
- more emphasis on building CONNECTIONS than on exercising CONTROL

Together they describe the most distinctive features of what has become known as the Strategic Choice Approach - sometimes now shortened to SCA - making it different and complementary to formal and resource-intensive procedures of organizational planning typically employed in larger organizations. This early work has since matured through a range of further projects - many of them involving the facilitation of intensive "strategic choice workshops" in both organizational and inter-organizational settings.

Further information:
http://www.stradspan.com