Governance in a Climate Emergency - The Hidden Power of Systems Thinking

Keynote speaker: **Ray Ison**

In this address, Ray Ison, Professor of Systems at the Open University (UK), offers explanations as to why governance systems (of nations, organisations, programs and projects) are no longer fit for purpose, thus failing citizens and other stakeholders in multiple contexts. He goes beyond explanation to offer heuristics, narratives, systemic design principles and a case for investment in cybersystremic praxis so as to transcend first-order change and generate whole system change towards systemic governance.

In the age of the Anthropocene the need for new ways of thinking and acting have become urgent. But patterns of obstacles are apparent in any action, be they corporate interests, lobbyists, or outdated political and government systems. Drawing on his recent book (with Ed Straw) he will show how and why failure in governance is at the heart of the collective incapacity to tackle the climate and biodiversity emergencies. But analysis whilst necessary is not sufficient. Strategies and rationales for incorporating systems thinking into governance at every level are provided as a means to enable us to break free of historical shackles. 26 principles for systemic governance are proposed.

Ray Ison is Professor of Systems at the UK Open University (OU) where Systems education and scholarship began in 1970. As part of ASTiP (Applied Systems Thinking in Practice Group) he is responsible with colleagues for managing a post-graduate program in Systems Thinking in Practice (STiP). His teaching and research achievements from a base in academia are extensive and internationally recognized. His concern for governance effectiveness was first triggered by his work in post-apartheid South Africa. He has held a number of leadership posts within the international Systems and Cybernetics community including Presidencies of the IFSR (International Federation for Systems Research) and ISSS (International Society for the Systems Sciences). From 2008-15 he was also Professor, Systems for Sustainability, at the Monash Sustainability Institute (MSI), where he created and led the Systemic Governance Research Program. His research field is systems praxeology, institutional innovation and systemic governance.