



Newsletter August 2015

Welcome to the fourth edition of the HARMONISE Newsletter – Please forward this newsletter to your contacts who may be interested in the HARMONISE Project and ask them to sign up for future issues via the [Newsletter mailing list link](#) here or via the button below.

We have some interesting features this month:

- **A spotlight on two of our HARMONISE tools** – The tools showcased here are both from our Finnish partner VTT. Together, they provide a powerful aid to forward planning. By facilitating alternative scenario assessment and by economic assessment, via resilience investment cost benefit analysis, the HARMONISE Tools help us to answer the perennial questions of: What are we facing? What are the options? What will it cost? and What will we get for our money? Please follow the links to get up to speed with this innovative on going work!! [HARMONISE Participatory Scenario Building Tool](#) & [HARMONISE Economic Evaluation Tool](#)
- **This month we have an [interview with Fergus Collie](#)**, Managing Director of RSK Environmental LLP - one of the leading Environmental Consultants. Fergus is an Engineer turned environmental assessment and clean up expert, for whom key HARMONISE research themes of risk assessment and resilience planning are central to everyday working - as he spends a considerable amount of time working in Iraq and other locations in which security is a key challenge! It is clear from his interview that witnessing the aftermath of 'having the worst happen' has brought a deep appreciation of the relationship between human behaviour, planning, design, scientific analysis and how this can all be harnessed and influenced to provide better, safer outcomes for society in the

future - a Holistic, or HARMONISEd approach we could say! That, and how best to get a comfortable fit in Flak jackets and fishing waders alike!!

We hope you enjoy our material and look forward to hearing from you via our social media channels – remember to sign up on the links below!

Thanks for reading - see you next month!

Get in Touch



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HARMONISE in context

HARMONISE Interview Series

Fergus Collie, CEng, MIMMM, MHKIE, FICT, CQP, MCQI
Managing Director – Middle East Region, RSK Environment LLC, Abu Dhabi

• Tell me how you first got involved with environmental security / resilience?

My background experience is in construction materials science and technology so I have always been interested in designing for durability, and therefore in sustainability, and re-use/recycling. The natural progression was into environmental consultancy in the broader sense. My previous business, STATS Limited, was acquired into the RSK Group about 10 years ago and my role changed when I took on operational responsibility leading teams involved in the provision of technical and professional services relating to

geotechnical and geophysical studies, land quality, environmental assessment and planning services, permitting and discharge of planning consents where we look at impacts on the environment and on human health.

•What has surprised you most about working in environmental security / resilience?

I think it is what can actually be achieved by applying science to the risk and adopting the means available to us to mitigate the impact; which can often involve relatively inexpensive changes in design, layout or even the relationship of a development to the elements, even its positioning relative to the way the wind blows.

•What do you find most challenging about the environmental security / resilience field?

Fixed mindsets, vested interests and scaremongering. I do believe the environment has a strong in-built resilience but we all need to be responsible in our actions, be prepared to look at the longer view and be open to the benefits of longer term investment. I worry about the doom merchants overstating the scenario and people switching off as a result.

•What's the best/worst thing to happen since you started your career in the resilience field?

I think the introduction in environmental law that the polluter pays, whereby those that produce pollution should bear the costs of mitigating the effect on the environment and human health is high up the list of good things. Worst, the lack of investment to prevent preventable natural disasters.

•If you could change one thing about urban resilience - what would it be?

I am not actually a great participant in the community and believe people should take a much more responsible approach themselves to looking after their own small part of the environment. I get cross when people either do not care or expect others to do it for them. It's about a heightening of social responsibility I suppose.

•What do you wish other people knew about environmental resilience?

Linked to the last question really, I wish people appreciated more the impact that their neglect or indifference can have on the lives of others. I wish other people knew that there is real value in reuse and recycling of materials that can also improve the quality of life. In my job I spend a great deal of my time currently in the Middle East oil fields and never cease to be amazed at the waste of natural and manufactured resources. Our company is dedicating much time and resource to change minds and bring a little innovation to recover the high value of wasted oil product deriving from spills and leaks, whilst at the same time that additional revenue can be redirected for clean up and land remediation. The volume of more domestic waste is legend with some less developed parts of the Middle East with urban and rural deserts strewn with empty plastic water bottles that potentially have another life.

•Tell me about some interesting people you've met while working in resilience?

When I first encountered the land remediation field I was staggered by the amount of science that is required in the detailed assessment of risk to the environment. To identify and assess the significance of an apparently basic contaminant>pathway>receptor linkage requires the teamwork of a host of specialists from geologists and hydrogeologists, to vapour specialist and acousticians, to marine, air quality and noise modellers; a fascinating bunch!

•What's your personal philosophy on what should be done about urban resilience?

I think developers should have an obligation to see beyond the realisation of their plans and their immediate revenue to make provision for managing future change. I am not expecting any long terms financial provision, rather a commitment in innovation in design and to crystal ball likely future scenarios and build in provisions for them. Too many fine structures are abandoned for new far too soon in their lives.

•Tell me about someone who has influenced the resilience field?

My CEO at RSK, Dr Alan Ryder, is inspirational in his challenging of the acceptable to bring new ideas and new applications for old ideas into play. He drives a philosophy of can-do, sometimes where limited resources are available just to make things happen when otherwise they would not, and improve the environment.

•What might (someone) be surprised to know about you?

In sport, whilst rugby union is my game, which I played too poorly for too long, I am a lifelong supporter of a provincial Scottish football club from my home town of Perth, St Johnstone.

•The interest in urban resilience seems to be growing. Why do you think that is?

The sad rise in global terrorism and the 24 hours news media coverage bring natural and human disasters into people's homes, workplaces and through mobile technology wherever they are. Whilst this might have the affect of numbing the senses, on a positive note I am enormously encouraged by the ability of so many young people who want change and by and large the social responsibility that our education system produces. However, conversely I think for sure we will see an ever increasing scrutiny of people and their behaviours and tighter controls on human liberties, which will increase interest and I expect this will bring an increase in social unrest often driven by social media.

•What do you think will change about environmental resilience over the next five years?

I hope to see a stricter enforcement of environmental legislation at all levels, not just air emissions from industrial plants but urban street scenes, uncontrolled scrap yards and dumps and most important of all, unsociable behaviour. The transition to renewable energy is slow and I believe we have a long way to go, but innovation needs a driver and that needs to be led by governments without influence from vested interests.

•If you weren't doing your current role, what would you be doing instead, or what would your life be like?

I was brought up in a farming family in Scotland and was required to work the farm as a youngster but circumstances somehow transpired to encourage me to follow a different path. I have seen a lot of the world and enjoyed many unique experiences as a result but I still have a hankering for early morning milking and late night harvesting.

•As an engineer, what sorts of trends do you see?

I see a greater reliance on the private sector and funding initiatives and as a consequence the development of value engineering to minimise costs, which I fear stifles innovation.

•How would (someone) describe you?

I suppose (outwardly) calm in a crisis and a hard worker, maybe a workaholic. Someone driven to see issues closed and impatient when they are not. A bit of a loner probably

but nevertheless I hope someone trying to influence minds for change.

•What do you do when you aren't working?

Often the answer I am afraid is working. However, I am a keen sports fan and like to travel when I can; often combining the two. I like to keep reasonably fit and I like to walk. I have a strong hankering for sea fishing and have been promising myself a boat for far too long.

•What else can you tell me about your role?

My job is managing director of the RSK business unit in the Middle East, based in Abu Dhabi but covering our operations further north in Iraq, Turkey and Romania. Whilst my time spent in Abu Dhabi is mainly relating to corporate matters, tender and project review, I do spend a substantial portion of my time in Iraq where I like to be hand-on involved with our projects there, and in the development and promotion of our laboratories (the first integrated geotechnical and environmental laboratory in Iraq to hold ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation). In Iraq we are more than an environmental consultant and look to be an active provider of engineering, science and technical services so we get involved in all sort of projects from geotechnical drilling to bioremediation of contaminated land and from environmental and social impact assessments to operating waste management centres.

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