# Capacity building for innovative individuals and organisations in 2014

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Exploring New Boundaries

## Introducing ariadne:

### a framework for creating emergent futures and innovative directions for wicked challenges

**Developed by Lynn Allen & Trudi Lang**

ariadne is both a character of Greek mythology who helped Theseus find his way out of the labyrinth as well as an acronym for **Applying Research and Innovation to Advance the Development of Networked Enterprises. ariadne** helps groups generate creative and sustainable futures in situations where there are no immediately recognisable solutions or those solutions are contested. It can also be applied to shorter term complex problem situations where no single agreement looks possible.

It has been developed in response to the characteristics of the world in which we now find ourselves. These include:

- perceived notions of complexity
- changing nature of organisations (to networks and virtual arrangements)
- increased emphasis on more complex work (with more routine work being outsourced or mechanised)
- changing needs of individuals who tend to be more highly educated and expect greater involvement in decisions and more opportunities for self direction in their work
- global in dimension (whether an organisation is global in its reach or it operates in an increasingly globalised world)
- perceived speed of change and pressure to act
- the privileging of the short term over the medium to longer term

**ariadne** is a contribution to the development of processes for thinking and acting for the future in this world.

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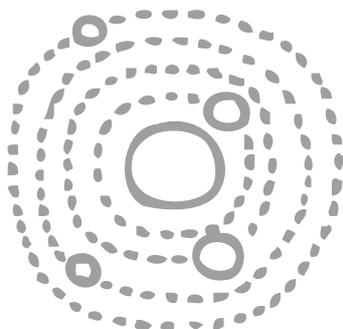
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## Background

While ariadne is a recent development, it draws on work from a number of established areas.  In particular, the Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) and the Futures (including Scenario Thinking-ST) fields as well as narrative, creative and dialogic traditions.

SSM was developed by Professor Peter Checkland and is an action research methodology that grapples with complexity and is premised on people taking purposeful action to address a problematic situation.  Scenario Thinking, as written and practiced extensively by well known proponents such as Professor Kees van der Heijden aims to deal with uncertainty by managing the gap between changes in the environment and the aspirations of the organisation.

The synergies and divergences of SSM and ST were taken up in a Deep Conversation in Perth in November 2003, attended by Professors Checkland and van der Heijden, and Mr Jaap Leemhuis from Global Business Network, Europe. As a result of that discussion, a number of ideas have been further developed by Lynn Allen and Trudi Lang.  A second Deep Conversation was held in London in October 2005 to explore further the development of the approach.

## Characteristics and applications

There are a number of defining characteristics of ariadne:

- It is a methodology and not a method.  A methodology is a firmer guide than a philosophy but lacks the precision of a technique.  Thus, a person using ariadne makes decisions at every point about how to undertake an inquiry

- It is based on soft rather than hard systems thinking.  That is, it takes as given that human activity is highly complex, with obscure or poorly defined goals, that issues can be extremely messy, and that stakeholders and participants have different perceptions. While hard systems thinking assumes that systems exist and can be 'engineered', a soft approach assumes this is too complex but the process to investigate can be organised as a system.

- Its soft systems heritage includes the understanding that outcomes cannot be taken as given; that systems ideas can be applied to learn about the situation; and that there are multiple perspectives on the situation and how it can be improved

- Its futures heritage includes the idea that the future cannot be studied but we can study people's perceptions and images of the future; the future is not a mere extrapolation of the past or present; and the future is largely open to being created

**ariadne** has therefore been developed to address situations where:
- people have a sense of something not being quite right in relation to the future
- innovative pathways are being sought more than business-as-usual options
- how to proceed is not clear or there are many views about the best way forward
- there are a number of different people or groups who need to be involved in the inquiry such as in a network enterprise or a loose coalition of interested parties.
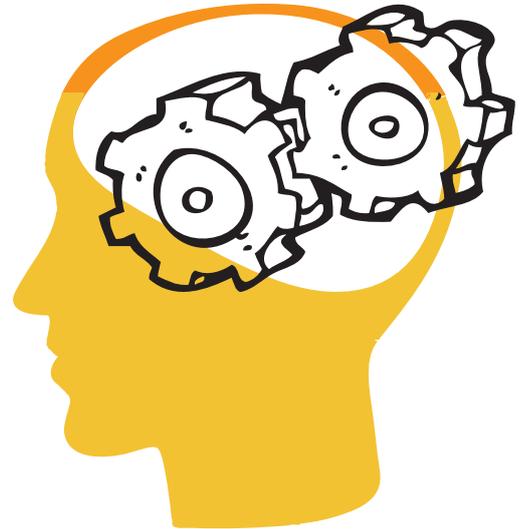
Such situations include addressing emerging strategic questions and 'big' industry or societal issues.
**ariadne** is thus positioned 'before strategy.'

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# Systems thinking as an alternate approach to problem-solving

**Few would disagree with the often-stated premise that change is a constant yet many of our business processes carry hidden assumptions that belie this belief.**

We talk of 'managing change' or 'periods of punctuated equilibrium' as if we are in charge of the world. We talk of motivating our people, describe our employees as 'human resources' or 'human capital' as if our people were entities that can be managed, controlled and directed. In today's organization - and, certainly in tomorrow's - an increasingly sophisticated workforce, networked through technologies yet unborn, will refuse to see themselves as objects to be managed. They may accept a role as follower if the leader shows qualities of respect and inclusion but they will also demand their own leadership place in the sun, a place where they are trusted to be innovative, decisive and knowledgeable.

The Newtonian scientific view that man can control nature is still strong in society. We hear politicians speak of 'managing the environment' and 'reforming the health system.' This word 'system' has become as meaningless as the word 'information' or 'technology' in everyday parlance. We use them as if we agree on their content. What is the health system or the education system? Where does it begin and end? Does the health system include acupuncturists and kinesiologists, astrologers and aromatherapists? Yes, for some people; a cacophonous NO! for others. Does the education system include weekend anger management seminars or creative writing workshops? Arguments would rail back and forth about training, accreditation, knowledge for knowledge's sake, knowledge as a commodity and so on.

When we are faced with a problem, usually we gather a group of experts and stakeholders (complete with their stake to drive into the heart of the opposing point of view) and ask for a shared solution. How often have you been in a meeting whose heat has reached volcanic proportions as one after another participant seeks to persuade the others to his or her point of view? All too often relationships are damaged and the final recommendation has more to do with power and good policy. What is happening here is a hidden set of assumptions is driving the various positions. There has been no checking that the group agrees on the boundaries and definitions of the problem situation.

Indeed, there is little overt exploration of the varying points of view, or an unfolding of deeply-held beliefs in the room. For example, if a group is charged with budget negotiations in a prison system, how will it decide on the programs to be funded versus those to be cut? What if there was a way to allocate funds according to what the group believed was important by articulating the assumptions behind the arguments? One person may see the prison as a place for punishment while another sees it as a place for rehabilitation? These two views cannot be reconciled in the budget negotiations unless they are articulated and those people who hold them learn about each other's world views and how they see them unfolding.

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Therefore, if you think of the world as a set of systems to be engineered and your view of the world is paramount, you will be perpetually operating on assumptions that you are in charge and it's all a matter of control. All you need do is get colleagues to agree on processes and structures to rearrange the system. However, if you see the world as a vastly complex and puzzling miasma of ever-changing phenomena and that it is impossible to know exactly what's going on, then you are open to the idea that maybe there are systems in the world but they are too complicated for us to define.

We can assume the world is organized intelligently but we ought to drop the arrogance that we understand it fully. We've only to look at some environmental damage, even the damage caused by some attempted solutions, to see that the physical world can trick us every time. 'Look' is the important word here for each of us is constrained by our own point of view

While scientists may argue that with hundreds of years of experimentation and knowledge they can define and predict outcomes, even the layman knows that with each new discovery, the point of view shifts both forwards to the newly discovered photon or peptide and backwards to change a pre-existing theory. How much more difficult is it then to handle human beings, these endlessly complex, culturally influenced, ever-changing conscious entities that we seek to lead in the workplace? As Peter Checkland (1981) says, 'we ought occasionally to remind ourselves that our descriptions and models of the world, even when well tested, are not the world itself.'

The Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) offers significant assistance as it illuminates hidden assumptions, treats human beings as continually seeking, attributing and making meaning of the world around them and accepts that there are always multiple views of the situation. SSM was developed by Professor Peter Checkland at the University of Lancaster and has over thirty years' action research and theoretical development behind it.

SSM is not a different set of techniques or a one-size-fits-all theory. Rather, SSM asserts the paramount quality of the person - imagination, thinking, listening, and conceptualization - and offers a way to tap into the collective wisdom of the group while encouraging individual creativity. This is exactly what is needed for today's professional and knowledge-focused organisations and, should leaders fail to do this, the brightest and talented younger workers with neither the commitment nor the desire for a long-term working relationship with any organization will take themselves elsewhere.

Essentially, with SSM, you work with colleagues to gather as rich a picture of what is going on as you can, recognizing that each person brings a different worldview to the situation. Usually not enough time is spent exploring opinions and ideas. SSM actively encourages this. In trying to solve a specific problem or develop a new idea, the group can imagine what systems might need to exist but instead of arguing about who's right, the SSM allows the creation of multiple models for these alternate futures. This reflects the premise that while the world is too complex for me to manage as a system, I can describe potential systems. I can explore what notional systems would look like to bring about a particular transformation from different perspectives. I can then present my models for discussion with my colleagues within an environment of seeking both to explain my view and to understand my colleagues' models and responses. Once the models are in place, with each person's worldview explicit and intact, it is possible to discuss ways forward and reach some accommodations about appropriate action.

So, if you are facing paradoxes or dilemmas that have produced strongly held opposing positions in your organization and you can't see a way forward, then SSM is what you need. In this way, we don't lose the deeply held beliefs or passions but, rather, we harness them in an open and conceptual way that enables true innovation to emerge. As Margaret Wheatley (1992) says: 'Innovation is fostered by information gathered from new connections; from insights gained by journeys into other disciplines or places; from active, collegial networks and fluid, open boundaries … Knowledge is generated anew from connections that weren't there before.' SSM offers a framework that takes us to this place.

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# CATWOE

## Clients

people affected by the system. These may be victims, beneficiaries, interested parties. They may also be owners.

## Actors

those people who are going to carry out the main activities of the system.

## Transformations

this is the main purpose. What inputs do we take, what do we do to them and what outputs do we achieve?

## Worldview

this is the deeply held values, beliefs and opinions of the owner of the system that enables the transformation to make sense.

## Owners

who are the primary people who can make 'make or break' decisions about the system as described in the transformation.

## Environment

what are elements outside the system that need to be taken into consideration when designing this system?

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# Tailored In-house Workshops

> 'Imagination is more important than knowledge"

## Innovative Thinking Workshop - Full day

Defining the problem is only the start. How to achieve agreement on how to move forward is the challenge that this workshop seeks to address by introducing participants to a framework for creating innovative solutions and futures.

The innovative thinking framework explored in this workshop combines systems thinking, futures methods and creativity techniques. It is a systematic way of collecting ideas and setting up situations where shared futures can emerge.

Participants will learn about systems thinking, several futures methods and creativity techniques. They will also learn methods that enable solutions to emerge rather than being driven by the most powerful player.

## Strategic Conversations Workshop - Full day

The Strategic conversations workshop explores the ariadne Strategic Conversation Framework, providing participants with a systematic way of conducting open conversations on future alternatives. To ensure practical application of the framework, the workshop presents the strategic conversation framework within the context of an issue relevant to the organisation.

This framework has been developed to assist organisations conduct effective and energising strategic conversations. The framework is a meta-methodology (rather than a method). This means that participants make decisions step by step about its use.

## Creative Futures Workshop - Full day

This workshop seeks to shift the internal focus of long term planners to a discussion about the kind of future environment into which the organisation could be travelling and to understand what assumptions we make about that environment.

This workshop introduces participants to scenarios, methods to enable creative exploration of the future, a framework to explore future alternative environments and methods to engage people in the process.

**These workshops are only offered as tailored in-house workshops for organisations. To book a workshop call Lynn on 9467 3689 or email admin@361degrees.com.au**

**For further information visit our website www.361degrees.com.au**

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# Stakeholder Engagement

## Innovation and creativity through engagement

**PELORUS** is a Western Australian inspired framework for understanding the complex moral relationships (legitimacy and power) within human activity systems (the education system for example) and the relative position of stakeholders within each system.

Placing moral relationships at the centre of stakeholder engagement, the theorist credited with progressing thought in the area, R.E. Freeman, defined a stakeholder as a group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the activity objectives. (Freeman, 1984)

The **PELORUS** stakeholder engagement framework does not "manage" stakeholders in a traditional public relations sense. It seeks to activate the potential of stakeholders to add true value through innovation in an environment where the exercise of coercive or persuasive power is minimised. This innovation encourages the exploration of alternative and unintended transformations ensuring the journey the stakeholder takes during the engagement process is as important as arriving at the hoped for destination.

In corporate social responsibility environments, stakeholder engagement is regularly used to test stakeholder acceptance of predetermined objectives. **PELORUS** is an ideal method to enhance corporate objectives by engaging stakeholders early to identify opportunities for innovation and confirm assumptions.

The attractiveness of **PELORUS** is its ability to enable activity owners and stakeholders to appreciate alternatives and the complexity of situations, whilst empowering them to collectively design pathways for more productive futures. While placing the highest possible value in dialogue, the framework does not seek consensus among stakeholders. Through a shared understanding of complexity and multiple worldviews, stakeholders generate a collective understanding that forms the basis for moving forward.

**PELORUS** embraces the messy and unpredictable nature of stakeholder dialogue as an opportunity for innovation. This makes **PELORUS** ideally suited to environments with inherent complexity and diverse stakeholder groupings. Whether used as a stand-alone framework or in conjunction with other methodologies such as ariadne, **PELORUS** encourages stakeholders to embrace new approaches for progressing complex situations.
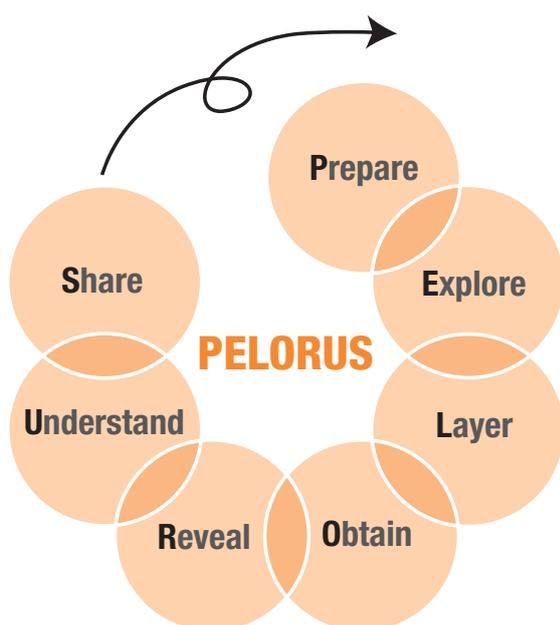
# Stakeholder Engagement Workshops

## Encouraging active participation and the recognition of the richness and diversity of stakeholder views
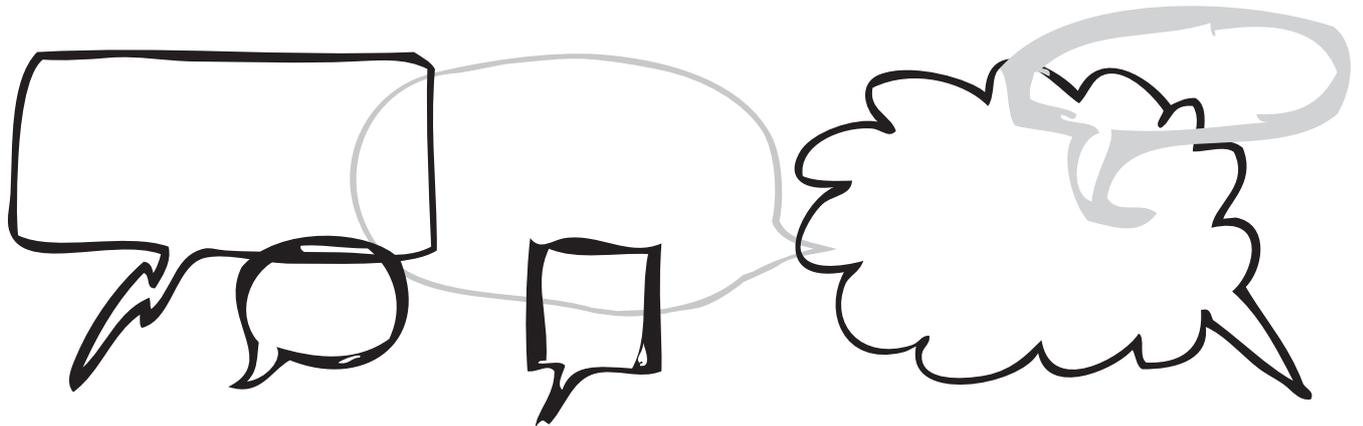
**The success of organisations is increasingly defined by corporate social responsibility criteria that places a high value on meaningful stakeholder engagement.**

This workshop aims to provide participants with the knowledge and tools to successfully engage stakeholders in multiple settings and reflects the AA1000SES International Standard for Stakeholder Engagement.

The workshop introduces participants to the seven elements of the **PELORUS** Engagement Framework, a stakeholder planning and engagement framework developed by experienced engagement consultants.

The **PELORUS** stakeholder engagement framework promotes real ownership of the engagement process by encouraging active participation and the recognition of the richness and diversity of stakeholder views.

**When:**  Thursday 15 May and Friday 16 May 2014
or
Thursday 30 October and Friday 31 October 2014

**Time:**  9.30am - 5.00pm

**Where:**  Kimberly Room, Ground Floor, State Library,
25 Francis Street, Northbridge

**RSVP:**  Register your interest at
admin@361degrees.com.au

**Info:**  For further information call Jamie Robertson
08 9467 3689

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# 2014 Workshop Schedule

| Workshop | Duration | Dates | Venue | Fee (Inc GST) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Stakeholder Engagement Workshops | 2 Days | Thurs 15 May 2014 & Fri 16 May 2014 | State Library | $550 |
| Stakeholder Engagement Workshops | 2 Days | Thurs 30 Oct 2014 & Fri 31 Oct 2014 | State Library | $550 |

## Number of Participants

We limit the number of participants in each workshop to a maximum of 10 and a minimum of four.
Where a workshop has less than four participants, we may offer an alternative format or defer the workshop.

## Payment Terms

All workshops must be paid in full prior to the scheduled workshop date.

## Cancellation Policy

1. If the workshop is cancelled the fee will be repaid in full.
2. If the participant cancels earlier than two weeks prior to the workshop date, a full refund will be paid.
3. If the participant cancels within two weeks, no refund is payable however the option of a six month credit to the same value is available for subsequent workshops.
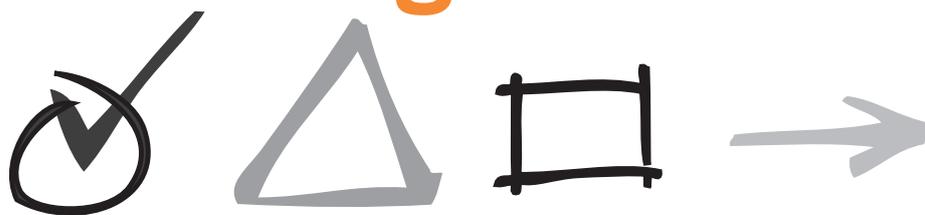
## Payment Options

We accept payment by direct debit and cheque and will provide a tax invoice.
We are unable to process credit card transactions.

## Bookings

To register to attend a workshop please email admin@361degrees.com.au
or for further information call 08 9467 3689

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# Consulting Services

361 Degrees offers clients strategic futures planning, communications, engagement and capacity building services and we encourage prospective clients to contact us directly to discuss how our services can be used in their organisation.

Our professional service offering reflects our commitment to implementing our approaches and are divided into professional services and capacity building services. Professional services include planning, advisory services, coaching and engagement services and can be used in projects and organisations irrespective of size or industry

## Professional Services

### Future Directions

361 Degrees uses an innovative strategic thinking and engagement framework to assist organisations to plan for a 10 years+ horizon. In the delivery of these services we tailor our approaches to reflect the political and social context and the aspirations of stakeholders. Our services include stakeholder engagement, scenario planning, strategic conversations and report preparation. Our services are also designed to support clients through the futures planning process and build internal capacity.

### Stakeholder Engagement

Drawing on their extensive experience, our consultants are guided by the strategic systems thinking framework the PELORUS Stakeholder Engagement Framework. The PELORUS framework enables stakeholders to clearly understand the complexity and diversity of situations, whilst empowering them to design practical pathways for a better future.

### Project Communications Management

At 361 Degrees, we believe project stakeholders should engaged rather than managed. Engagement opens the potential for stakeholders to add value to a project and significantly increase the projects benefit realisation. In a project environment, stakeholder engagement is both an cultural orientation and a planning exercise. While our consultants are effective in stakeholder planning and engagement, we achieve our best results when we partner with project teams that acknowledge stakeholders have a valid claim for dialogue with their project.

### Policy / Strategy Development

Working with an emergent and iterative strategic thinking framework, 361 Degrees' consultants can conceptualises complexity and the social and political context of policy and strategy development. We actively seek to engage stakeholders around complexity and use stakeholder knowledge of explore potential pathways and scenarios.

### Project / Program Evaluation

Taking the time to measure the impact of a project or program on a target group is wildly accepted as best practice. At 361 Degrees we work with our clients to develop an evaluation methodology as part of the project / program initiation or as a reflective process. Our ability to effectively engage with stakeholders ensures that our evaluations are rich in qualitative insights.

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# Be the Change

## 361 Degrees
## Stakeholder Engagement Services

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