

Keynote 3 – “There and back again” ... or, “The mice’s dilemma”

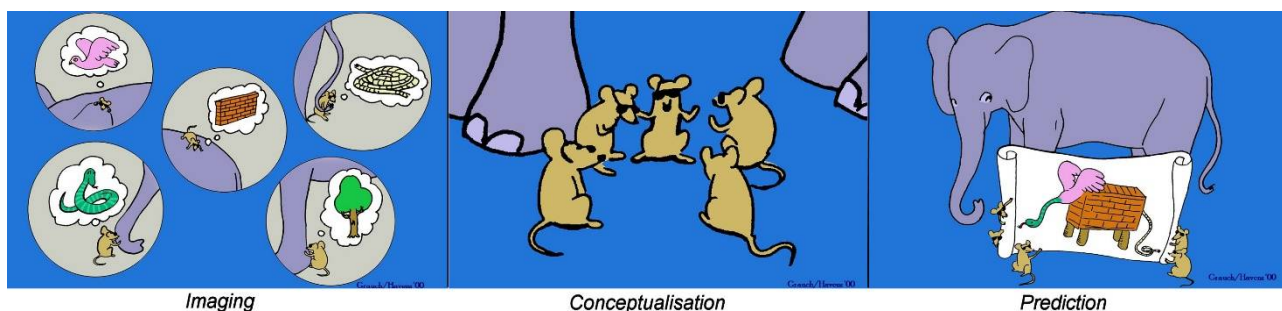
Ken Witherly

Ken Witherly graduated from UBC (Vancouver Canada) with a BSc in geophysics and physics in 1971. He then spent 27 years with the Utah/BHP Minerals company during which time as Chief Geophysicist, he championed BHP’s programs in airborne geophysics which resulted in the development of the MegaTEM and Falcon technologies. In 1999, Ken helped form a technology-focused service company that specializes in the application of innovative processing and data analysis to help drive the discovery of new mineral deposits.

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The Sub20 undertaking represents what could be considered as yet again the efforts by our geoscience community to develop the means to understand the subsurface whether for minerals, petroleum/gas, water and increasingly toxic materials often caused by anthropogenic activity. Now as then, the science and engineering being applied is the ‘best of the day’ and programs are well-funded and overall well run. Outcomes, however, have almost always fallen short of what was hoped for and after what seems like a mandatory period of silent reflection, the community organizes again to mount yet another expedition. What is suggested based on being involved with a number of such programs directly and having observed many others, is we forget that people need a vision and motivation to succeed that which transcends the pure technical challenges in front of them. The term ‘silos’ is often used to describe the barriers that are present and the importance of ‘silo-jumpers’ or ‘silo-breakers’ to the success of programs is grossly underappreciated. It is suggested that a program as complex as Sub20 consider the formal role for a project baird who can cross-link the people developing complex ideas to better be able to cross-convey their work to others through the use of traditional styles of communication such as song and poetry that have fallen out of favour.



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