



research today for land use tomorrow

## Macaulay Land Use Research Institute Seminar

Wednesday 18 August

**Angela Wardell-Johnson**

Institute for Biodiversity and Climate Theme of Integration, Curtin University, Australia

### Landscapes: the social dimension and implications for decision-making in land management

People make decisions about landscapes so understanding the complex interface of ecological and human systems is important in maintaining systemic resilience and adaptive capacity. Social patterns define environmental problems and thus the frameworks for questions, discoveries and solutions are negotiated between decision-making sectors.

This research into decision-making in rural Australian landscape systems focuses on three critical social dimensions: sense of place; social capital; and discourses of the environment. The research was conducted using an explorative methodology framed by complex systems theory, as a three part study. A wide reference to literature provided conceptual models as a starting point. This was followed up through quantitative exploration to identify the structure of two rural agricultural communities through an ecological sampling and questionnaire analysis using numerical taxonomy. A further hypothesis testing qualitative exploration provided insights into the tensions identified through the numerical taxonomy and nuanced detail.

The research identified emergent characteristics of these socio-ecological systems as being dynamic interactions between local, scientific and indigenous knowledges; the interaction across social scales; and the mix of triple bottom line values. Finding out about the processes that drive & maintain these systems provided simple tools for people involved in environmental problem solving.

Angela Wardell-Johnson is an Environmental Sociologist leading Curtin's Institute for Biodiversity and Climate Theme of Integration. Based in the Centre for Advanced Studies in Australia, Asia and the Pacific (CASAAP), her research is considered 'post-disciplinary' effectively spanning and integrating ecological and social sciences through a framework of resilience. Angela's key theoretical focus considers the rationales for decision-making in complex adaptive landscape contexts through the lenses of sense of place, social capital and environmental discourses.

Angela is currently a visiting researcher with the Centre for Complexity at the University of Warwick in the UK.

*2pm in Macaulay Suite B*

*All welcome*

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