



Landscape Loopholes

Social-Ecological Systems

Social systems often appear to resist positive change for social-ecological sustainability. Crisis point is reached before resource users can collectively respond to the collapse of surrounding ecological systems. Collapse of economies, health and community soon follows.

This research aims to understand the characteristics of opportunities for a timely alteration of course away from collapse and towards sustainability. Landscapes are the major theatre of interactions of the cross-scale dynamics of social and ecological change. Institutions contributing pressures and responses consequently shape future landscapes. The interactions of entwined social-ecological

systems produce emergent properties such as market economies and land degradation of major consequence to future sustainability. Social-ecological systems also possess self-organising capacities responsive to pressures of change.

Overtime, the cycles of complex social-ecological systems reach crossroads which might be either: crisis points at which future options are no longer available; or turning points where opportunities arise when it is easier to alter course towards more ecologically sustainable resource use, communities, institutions and policies. The research will build knowledge to identify and strategically use such potential moments for decisive and innovative re-direction.



Research Outline

How do we affect more timely and positive change towards sustainability in complex human-resource systems? Sometimes major changes happen in communities, resource management and policy, and sometimes they don't. Why? This is the core research question for this project. Through a focus is on regional landscapes, natural resources, resource communities, and environmental law and policy, analysis will be

used to explore these questions. The results of the work will have far reaching implications for other areas of social policy.

In this research project, we intend to explore and analyze several instances of transformative change. Cases will be selected from around the world, and we will attempt to illustrate different types of policy systems, and different kinds of policy processes and external conditions.



The major outcomes from this research will be a book describing and analysing a series of case studies. These will provide a foundation to elicit an understanding of the timing, synergies and characteristics that provide responsive capacity to "Alter Course" towards sustainability and future resilience in interdependent social-ecological systems.

Project Details

Project Title: "Transformations in Linked Social-Ecological Systems: Understanding Windows of Opportunity to Alter Course towards Sustainable Futures"

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