



Global Ideas in Local Places: The Humanities in Environmental Management

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ABSTRACT Land management has become a multi-faceted enterprise, with professionals, locals and others contributing variously to the outcomes, increasingly working in partnership arrangements all over the world. However, each local place has a different suite of ‘experts’ speaking for its future. This paper explores four key drivers of conservation initiatives: place, landscape, biodiversity and livelihood, and how these shape environmental management in the Desert Channels region of south-western Queensland and in the Quantock hills in Somerset, England. The aim is to show how the question of who is an authority on place contrasts in these two ecologically distinct places, and at different times in the period from 1945 to the present. The two cases demand very different scales of management, and build on different cultural traditions, but they share a surprising number of commonalities, particularly about who are the experts in managing the future of the natural world. The commonalities reflect global forces that are changing the environmental management of local places. The paper considers the value of art, history and the broader humanities in enriching and critiquing global scientific and management ideals and in empowering communities to engage in dialogue about managing their local places.

Prologue

This paper began with an invitation from an artist. Mandy Martin suggested that we work together to prepare a book in partnership with her and a local community in southwest Queensland about biodiversity, land management practices and community values. The project *Desert Channels: The Impulse to Conserve* unfolded over the years from 2007-2010 with the support of the local natural resource management body, Desert Channels Queensland (DCQ).¹

Biodiversity management in Australia has been increasingly privatised since the 1990s as governments have increasingly offered incentives to enable private landholders to manage nature conservation values. Since 1997, non-government organisations (NGOs) have been encouraged to purchase land for nature reserves through matching funds from the Natural Heritage Trust (established 1997). More recently, in 2007, Queensland passed legislation to

¹ Libby Robin, Chris Dickman and Mandy Martin, eds., *Desert Channels: The Impulse to Conserve* (Melbourne, CSIRO Publishing, 2010); 352 pages (with colour illustrations and line art). In May 2011, a second, paperback edition was released, as the first edition had sold out.

require landholders to actively manage production lands for biodiversity, a response to extensive land clearing in that state. Southwest Queensland with its DCQ management team offered a case study of private sector, NGOs and local government working together for nature conservation in 'PPPs', that is public-private partnerships.² Ethabuka and Cravens Peak, former pastoral properties bordering the Simpson desert, are two of the largest reserves purchased and managed by the NGO Bush Heritage Australia, and these reserves were the focus of our project. Martin and I worked with Chris Dickman, a desert ecologist who has worked on scientific sites in these properties for two decades and whose work encouraged Bush Heritage to purchase them for their biodiversity values.

Mandy Martin had been visiting the region annually for many years, including 2007 and 2008, when she had begun a series of suites of paintings "4x4s", naming the suites for the 4-wheel drive vehicles one needs to travel across this country of dunes and sand ridges. In 2007 and 2008, it was dry country at the end of a decade of drought. I joined her for the trip in 2009, when the rains came, the drought broke and the local community was joyful. The extraordinary season of 2009 created very different field work opportunities. One hot day in late May, while Mandy painted on her ironing board, I explored the country of her easel. I ventured into the ephemeral Lake Pulchera, swimming for over two hours, but covering a mere fraction of the lake's extent. I watched the birds at eye-level, darting in and out of the reeds and salt-tolerant samphire plants at the edge of the lake, and I paddled on my back observing many more flying overhead. This was my second visit to this place. Five years earlier in 2004, I had walked in the places where I swam. Then, the dust rose all around as wild camels—about 90 of them, we estimated—churned up the fine, grey, silty soils, while land winds whipped up a dust storm. There was little vegetation and crows were the only birds we saw or heard. In 2004 it took great imagination to see this place as a biodiversity reserve. To know a place through swimming is very different from walking. Seasons in this place confound even such basic categories as 'land' and 'water'. The Australian arid zone is the most variable place in the world: it is extraordinary to have a bodily experience of that variability in Lake Pulchera in two visits, five years apart. As I swam in 2009, I knew it was important. But it was only later that I realised that I was swimming the dust bowl of another season.

The aim of the Desert Channels project was to capture the shared 'impulses to conserve' in the community and among others who cared about the region. We chose not to isolate nature preservation from economic survival, but rather to treat them as interdependent conversations. We wanted to allow an equality of 'voice' for local farmers, Aboriginal traditional owners, professional land managers, scientists, historians and other interested parties. Forty-six people contributed significantly to creating the book. People expressed themselves in their own ways. Some contributors chose photographs or artworks, others writing.

² The Council of Australian Governments endorsed the National Public Private Partnership Policy and Guidelines on 29 November 2008. All Australian, state and territory government agencies now apply the National Policy and Guidelines. The National Policy and Guidelines effectively replace previously existing policy and guidelines in those jurisdictions. (accessed 20 December 2011, http://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/public_private/). Internationally, see Akintola Akintoye, Matthias Beck and Cliff Hardcastle, eds., *Public-Private Partnerships: Managing Risks and Opportunities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003); M. Schäferhoff, S. Campe, and C. Kaan, "Transnational Public-Private Partnerships in International Relations: Making Sense of Concepts, Research Frameworks, and Results," *International Studies Review* 11 (2009): 451–474.

The project itself drew on the skills of each of us, and forced us to work across the traditional barriers created by professional technical expertise.

We arranged the book in sixteen chapters, and four parts: place, landscape, biodiversity and livelihood—echoing the 4X4 pattern of Mandy Martin’s suites of artworks. The resulting book is not a singular consensus about what needs to be conserved, but rather, a device to facilitate conversation about different impulses to conserve, a device shaped as much by the moral considerations of nature conservation as by the scientific. Bush Heritage created the reserves on Ethabuka and Cravens Peak for their biodiversity values, but many local pastoralists were more concerned about pastoral settlement heritage, while Indigenous owners identified ‘songlines’ (closely following channel courses or rivers, in practical terms) as the focus for conservation effort. Aesthetic appreciation and evaluation, prompted by Martin’s work, continued in the photographs by artists, managers and scientists. The four parts gave us space to include scientific, artistic, historical and local knowledge, and to mix the ‘expertise’ or authority on place. The significance of a place is not singular but rather a ‘bundle of significant features’, just as environmental and human rights are not a single ‘property right’ or ‘civil right’ but rather a ‘bundle of rights’. This is the approach taken to heritage assessment in the Burra Charter, which recognises cultural and natural values together, and works on the ethical principle that the values of *all* cultural groups should be acknowledged as ‘co-existing’.³ I use *place, landscape, biodiversity* and *livelihood* here to structure this paper and unpack the bundled values, as I argue for a broader spectrum of expertise in framing a collective ‘authority’ to speak for managing places of natural significance.

Background

The management of nature reserves and regional natural resources in many western nations is no longer regarded as the responsibility of a single specialist authority such as a national parks authority, forestry commission or scenic reserves commission. Rather it is a matter for ‘partnerships’ and local networks. In many different ecosystems and at many different scales, governments are increasingly supporting partnerships with the private sector, with non-government organisations, and most particularly with ‘local communities’ in this work. The complexity of managing places for a wide range of possible futures demands negotiation, democratic discussion and finally, a careful balancing of opinions. Land management has become a multi-faceted enterprise, with professionals and locals contributing variously to the outcomes.

When the Victorian National Parks Association was established in Australia in 1956, its motto was ‘for all the people for all time’.⁴ The democracy of the future was unproblematic at a time when ‘all the people’ were deemed to want the same thing. ‘All the people’ was, perhaps, a more challenging concept in England and Wales, where people actually lived in national

³ Article 2, “Code on the Ethics of Co-existence in Conserving Significant Places,” (adopted by Australia ICOMOS, 1998). Australia. Australia Icomos. *Burra Charter*: 20, accessed 20 December 2011, http://australia.icomos.org/wp-content/uploads/BURRA_CHARTER.pdf Thanks to Heather Goodall for this point.

⁴ Libby Robin, *Defending the Little Desert: The Rise of Ecological Consciousness in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1998); Robin, Libby, “One Hundred Years of Campaigning: the Prom and the Public,” *Gippsland Heritage Journal* 23 (1999): 23–27.

parks: 350,000 of them by the end of the 1980s.⁵ In Australia, legislation for national parks prevented people from living in them, and the perceived emptiness of these places enabled professionals to manage them as ‘nature only’ zones. National parks in Australia were not residential (apart from basic camping)—and so the aim of management was uncomplicated: to minimise the impact of people. While nature was ‘unspoiled’ (conserved by people) in England, it was ‘wild’ (conserved by natural forces) in Australia.

In recent years, however, the idea that natural values in national parks in Australia could be preserved ‘for all time’ came under challenge, partly from a shift in the ideas in the science of ecology. The idea of unchanging places in natural balance that could be preserved as they were in perpetuity became a problem in itself. Ecosystems were *dynamic*, and the earlier idea of a ‘balance in nature’ gave way to a focus on change and the forces that drove it, especially evolution and co-evolution, and more latterly, adaptation to climate change. Systems thinking affected ideas of society (‘all people’) too. Societies are no longer assumed to be stable and structured and therefore amenable to management as a whole, but rather, they are chaotic, individualistic, dynamic and changing. The dynamic model of society demands ‘negotiation’ rather than fixed rules of management, and partnerships rather than a single authority.⁶

In this paper I consider the present ‘partnership agreements’ that characterise environmental management in two extremely different places, Desert Channels Queensland in Australia, and the Quantock hills in Somerset, England. The democratic governments that support these places have similar legal and governmental systems, and national peoples with similar aspirations, but the scale of the places and the ecological differences between them have constructed the idea of ‘authority’ in rather different ways. What the two places have in common is a concern for the consideration of nature: both are part of the ‘national reserves system’, to use the Australian terminology—in each case, a network of protected areas, conserving examples of natural landscapes and native plants and animals for future generations. Neither place is just a ‘national park’.

(i) Quantock hills, Somerset, England: An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Quantock region was declared an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1957, the first of these in England. It narrowly avoided being classified as part of the Exmoor National Park nearby, partly due to the lobbying of local residents and the group, Friends of Quantock (established in 1949 to oppose forestry in the area). As an AONB, the managers of the Quantock region are not required to manage the ‘access’ requirements (maintain paths and car parks) as specified in the legislation for National Parks in England and Wales. Rather, they negotiate with local people and residents about what sorts of access are suited to their needs, some of which include hunting and other uses not part of ‘national parks’.

⁵ The figure of 350,000 is for the late 1980s. Countryside Commission, *National Parks Review: A Discussion Document* (Cheltenham: Countryside Commission, 1989), 3.

⁶ On the shift in sociology (under such influences as Talcott Parsons) from stability and structure in the 1950s, to a focus in the 1960s and 70s on the ‘emergent’ properties of social systems driven from the bottom up by creative agents, see R. Keith Sawyer, *Social Emergence: Societies as Complex Systems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 12–14. He calls these the first and second wave theories of society, respectively.

(ii) Desert Channels, Queensland Australia: a place of natural resource management

Desert Channels Queensland (DCQ) manages the natural resources of a vast place that includes one national park, the Simpson Desert National Park (established in 1967, 10,120 kms²), and three major private nature reserves established more recently (since 2004) by the non-government organisation, Bush Heritage Australia (Ethabuka (21,5500 ha), Cravens Peak (23,3000 ha) and Edgbaston (8100 ha), totalling 4,566 kms²). These nature reserves and the national park all contribute to the National Reserves System, together with other small reserves and public land areas in the region. DCQ's remit is natural resource management, rather than land management. But its work has practical implications for the National Reserves System, for example in sponsoring efforts that maximise the connectivity between 'natural places'. Their work goes beyond the reserves, which are managed by specific groups (National Parks Queensland, Bush Heritage Australia). DCQ works in partnerships with these groups but its responsibility is for the whole 'place' recently named Desert Channels by long term resident, Angus Emmott.⁷

Some differences between the two case studies

The differences between the Quantocks and Desert Channels are dramatic. The Quantock hills feel quite remote, but they are compact: a good walker can walk the length of the hills in a single day, although there are a total of 250 kilometres of Public Rights of Way folded into their landscape. The official area is 99 kms². Two thousand and seven hundred people reside within this area. They are a range of uplands bordered at one end by the Somerset north coast that features significant fossils and dramatic geological scenery. It is a relatively wild area, with no surf or beach amenities. It is under little pressure from tourism, apart from fossil hunters with their geological hammers. By contrast, at the opposite end of the hills there is the Vale of Deane, a well-developed area that includes the medium sized town of Taunton. Taunton marks a decisive boundary to the area of 'unspoiled beauty'. However, AONB borders are generally porous: activities around the Quantocks are closely monitored by AONB managers for impact on the quality of the place, including the views from the hills. The primary 'users' of the area are the people nearby, 133,455 people live within ten miles (sixteen kilometres) and nearly half a million people (475,963) within twenty miles (thirty-two kilometres). The present managers have calculated that the Quantocks receive 400,000 visitor days per annum, mostly people who live in this region.

Desert Channels is a region of half a million square kilometres where just 5,000 people live outside the major towns. The normal way to get around is by four-wheel drive (4X4), as many of the roads are not sealed, and all are liable to flooding. The biggest town (and the base for DCQ) is Longreach (population 3,400 approx). The region encompasses the rolling sandy dunes of the Simpson Desert, the pastoral Channel Country, and the Desert Uplands biome, historically also a pastoral area that has recently been slated for coal-mining (the new 'Galilee Basin'). The Channel Country is the largest, and most economically and ecologically important part of Desert Channels. Its ephemeral, inland running rivers are the source of most of the water found in the vast desert country to the west. These rivers, when not absorbed by the

⁷ The decision to call the region 'Desert Channels' was made when the Lake Eyre Basin Co-ordinating Group was split into the north-western (Queensland) group and the south-eastern group. The name was incorporated in 2005. (Angus Emmott *pers. com.* May 2009). Angus's family has lived in the region for four generations. See Karen Emmott, "Connecting with our Land," in Robin *et al.*, *Desert Channels*, 44–59.

sandy soils or the evaporative powers of a scorching sun, are channelled through Warburton creek to the (rarely wet) Lake Eyre (sixteen metres below sea level) in South Australia.

The 'anastomosing', braided channels provide some of the best pastoral country of the Australian outback, and the Mitchell grasslands supported by the channels were critical to linking the remote pastoral stations of nineteenth century Cattle Kings, of whom Sidney Kidman is most famous.⁸ The Great Artesian Basin supplies reliable water to the region in the times when the rivers are dry. Pastoral properties access ground water using bores, but the flow from these is diminishing after more than a century of use, and few recharge events. There is a fossil story in this landscape too. It is a place where many of Australia's finest dinosaur specimens have been found and it attracts visitors interested in dinosaur tourism.⁹

Desert Channels and the Quantocks share a strong 'sense of place', and pride in their working landscapes, but the scale of the work and the ways the landscapes are appreciated are very different. Different 'senses of place' favour different sorts of expertise in developing the partnerships that support those authorised to manage the country, and this paper explores these differences. My own expertise is as an historian, and an outsider. My attachment to these places is superficial: in each case, I have been invited in to be part of the 'mix' that comments on policy development and management in the region. In the Desert Channels, Mandy Martin's networks enabled me to work directly with DCQ, Bush Heritage and with land holders in the region. In the case of the Quantocks, I participated in a single, three-day workshop on 'Local Places, Global Processes' organised by Bristol University through the Environmental Histories Network (UK) and sponsored by a grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (Landscapes and Environment Section).¹⁰

Place

Place is above all personal. It is difficult to professionalise, or to be an 'expert' about, except by virtue of lived experience. It is not space. Some define space as infinite and absolute, beyond human relationships. Others define it precisely: space is something *measurable*: it is amenable to Geographic Information Systems and other spatial tools. Place is not measurable in this way. It is defined by the relations between the country and the people who perceive it. In philosopher Ed Casey's phenomenological account of place, the role of perception is central. Place is 'created' by what he calls "sensations", "sense data" or "impressions": in short, people make place in some sense out of their lived experience.¹¹ Anthropologist Tim Ingold, describes the way walking makes place cultural.¹² Fred Myers describes the transition from space to 'country' in the Pintupi lands of central Australia using stories in the land, "a habit of mind that

⁸ Ion Idriess, *Cattle King* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1936); Mary Durack, *Kings in Grass Castles* (London: Constable and Co., 1959).

⁹ Scott Hocknull and Alex Cook, "Dragons, Diprotodons, Dinosaurs and Dust: 150 million years of Desert Channels prehistory," in Robin *et al.*, *Desert Channels*, 210–223.

¹⁰ The organiser of this workshop was Peter Coates. The other members of the Network Team were Paul Warde and David Moon. I thank them all for including me in this very stimulating event, held 1–3 March 2011. Accessed 11 August 2012, http://www.environmentalhistories.net/?page_id=10.

¹¹ Edward S. Casey, "How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena," in *Senses of Place*, eds. S. Feld and K. Basso (Santa Fe: School of American Research Advanced Seminar Series, 1996), 13–52, esp. 17

¹² Tim Ingold, "Culture on the Ground. The World Perceived Through the Feet," *Journal of Material Culture* 9, no. 3 (2004): 315–340.

looks behind objects to events and sees in objects a sign of something else."¹³ Deborah Rose describes "singing up country."¹⁴ Sensation is not passive, but active, and it is this connection between people and land, a connection through history or story, which makes country. Aboriginal people in Australia 'call up' country, they *make* it a place using fire and song, and such relations with land subtend human rights, ecological restoration and reconciliation in wild, frontier country in northern Australia, in places that are often treated as 'empty' by those who define place in terms of economic uses.¹⁵

Although anthropologists have led phenomenological accounts of place and place-making, there is also a literary tradition of bioregionalism, particularly in the United States, that explores writing as a way of making place.¹⁶ The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, a North American Group with active chapters in Europe, Scandinavia and Australasia, is one 'professional' group that supports place studies and bioregional thinking.¹⁷ Bioregionalism is a term that privileges subjective responses. Literature, poetry, nostalgia and personal responses can all define place rather better than measuring sticks, maps and numbers.

Landscape and place are brought together in a provocative new collection, *The Place of Landscape*, edited by philosopher Jeff Malpas. Malpas runs an international 'place research network' at the University of Tasmania, which explores "place-oriented research through ... developing contacts with community groups that have specific interests in place-related issues..."¹⁸ The subtitle of his book, 'Concepts, Contexts, Studies', speaks to the way his work explicitly privileges the local. Malpas seeks to get beyond both the spatial and the visual, to include the temporal and the full gamut of ways of knowing.¹⁹

Place is rich in memory. Childhood experience can be crucial to forming an understanding of place, yet childhood places are psychologically lost for the adult. Such places somehow shifts shape, tone and mood as the viewer's consciousness changes across a lifetime and are truly impossible to 'manage' or measure. But the childhood place (for example, the 'beach holiday place') reveals the extent to which the temporal dimensions of a place are at least as important as the spatial ones. History offers something different from Google maps. Both 'define' place, but enable very different senses of what *makes* place.

Landscape

While a place can be beautiful—even perhaps 'outstandingly' so, it is odd to describe an 'area' in this way. 'Outstanding Natural Beauty' comes from within: it is a subjective response. An

¹³ Fred R. Myers. *Pintupi Country: Pintupi Self: Sentiment, Place and Politics among Western Desert Aborigines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 67.

¹⁴ Deborah Bird Rose, *Nourishing Terrains: Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness* (Canberra: Australian Heritage Commission, 1996).

¹⁵ Deborah Bird Rose, *Reports from a Wild Country: Ethics for Decolonisation* (Sydney, UNSW Press, 2004).

¹⁶ See for example, Tom Lynch, Cheryll Glotfelty and Karla Armbruster, eds., *The Bioregional Imagination: New Perspectives on Literature, Ecology, and Place* (Georgia FL: University of Georgia Press, 2012).

¹⁷ 'Bioregional' in the United States is close to 'place studies' in Australia. In Australia, 'bioregional' connotes management and science, rather than literature. See Libby Robin, "Seasons and Nomads: Reflections on Bioregionalism in Australia," in Lynch et al., *The Bioregional Imagination*, 278–294.

The Nordic Network for Interdisciplinary Environmental Studies explicitly links its work to ASLE, accessed 11 August 2012, <http://www.kth.se/en/abe/om-skolan/organisation/inst/philhist/tekhist/Forskning/nies2>.

¹⁸ Accessed 10 March, 2011, <http://www.utas.edu.au/placenet/expanding.html>.

¹⁹ Jeff Malpas, ed., *The Place of Landscape: Concepts, Contexts, Studies* (Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 2011), ix.

'area' is measurable, rational and amenable to management. The managers of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty such as the Quantocks have to grapple with the inside/outside elements of the terminology that defines their work.

The development of the technique of *Landscape Character Assessment* (LCA) is one response to this dilemma. Emma-Jane Preece, a professional landscape architect, explained how she assessed the Quantocks using 144 character areas that 'identify, classify and describe' the 'character' of the landscapes of England.²⁰ She uses three major elements:

1. geology, landform, hydrology;
2. soils and associated vegetation;
3. historic and current influences of land use and settlement

LCA is a system specifically generated to explore the 'human' in the landscape. It dissects taxonomically landscapes that have been overtly modified by humans. It is a practical taxonomic classification system for managers, somewhat independent of the actual place. The tool of LCA trained the expert eye, indeed, created the expertise (using Geographic Information Systems (GIS)), and a skilled worker could learn quickly to assess on a broader scale or a micro-scale. In the Quantocks, Preece's work was complemented by that of Hazel Riley, an archaeologist who was more conscious of time than space. She worked at the scale of a 'dig', a fine and detailed technique for small areas, which was useful as a way to deepen the historical (and prehistoric) elements within the predominantly spatial LCA. Riley explored multiple scales in time in small fixed places to provide a detailed chronology of the landscape.

In England, human labour (perhaps particularly, agricultural labour) is perceived as contributing to a landscape's natural beauty. Many English people comment on and admire the careful laying of a hedge. They grieve the passing of hedge craft that maintained the fields and agricultural plots of yore. A landscape of fields of golden harvests fenced by hedges and of hollow lanes deepened by long foot and hoof traffic is traditionally beautiful in this country. There are elements of this pre-industrial artistry that contribute 'heritage character' amenable to the LCA process. In Australia, the scale of agriculture and pastoralism is much larger, more than human-size, and all has been undertaken with the technologies of the industrial revolution. In England the pre-industrial romantic survived the industrial revolution in pockets like the Quantocks. By contrast, late-twentieth and twenty-first century Australian agriculture could be described as 'hyper-industrial'. A landscape created by laser-levelling, enormous harvesters and sprayed and watered from a helicopter or small plane, hardly qualifies as one of 'outstanding natural beauty', even for those who admire efficient production landscapes.²¹ Such broad scale landscapes are *achievements*, wearing the badge of progress and modernity. They represent a triumph over nature, not an aesthetic enhancement of landscape.

²⁰ Emma-Jane Preece, presentation AONB office for the Quantocks, Fyne Court near Taunton, 2 March 2011, "Environmental Histories: Local Places, Global Processes, Workshop 2," Accessed 13 March 2011, http://www.environmentalhistories.net/?page_id=336 The Character of England Map that she used is 1:250,000 scale, but there are finer scales for individual assessments.

²¹ On industrial agriculture, see George Main, *Heartland: The Regeneration of Rural Place* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2005).

'Landscape' in the hands of managers is amenable to Geographic Information Systems thinking, a cartographic gaze, and particularly an aerial overview.²² It is very visual, and much concerned with edges—beginnings and endings of units. A visual artist also classifies the landscape, but allows it to have porous edges: the distant perspective may be contrasted artistically with the foreground. An artist captures the view from inside the viewer, and makes personal horizons and frames important. Artist Jenny Graham, who works in the Quantocks, explores the question of what makes a place unique.²³ Her subject matter is also her home: she uses both representational and abstract elements to convey mood and colour. Such work fulfils a very different purpose from a landscape character assessment, but could complement it.

The English idea of a place that is 'visually unspoilt' often obscures the role that pre-industrial dwelling in the land has contributed to the landscape of hedges and hollow lanes. Jenny Graham's art, particularly her abstract paintings, draw out the strong shapes that fields and pathways impose on the landscape: she plays with the human shapes in the landscape, and emphasises them with blocks of colour. In a sense she emphasises that people might be good for country, playing with the edges, rather than using them as limits as spatially-based management tools tend to do.

Mandy Martin, the senior artist in the Desert Channels project, describes her work as 'aesthetic evaluation'. She explicitly offers it as a way of contributing to the 'strategic and economic value' in the landscape. She uses terms like the 'view-shed' or 'visual catchment' (based metaphorically on hydrological terms such as 'watershed' and 'water catchment', which are routinely incorporated into development evaluations). She notes that even in "the remote country of the Desert Channels, we see the impacts of tourism, mining, exploration, urban settlement and maintenance of the road system, and everywhere the impact of the grazing industry."²⁴ Aesthetic evaluation is her active intervention against things that disrupt "the healthy functioning of this complex interdependent set of land systems": Martin here adopts the spatial language of the dominant management rhetoric, but in her canvases, own personal, sensual appreciation of country emerges. She offers a way to contribute a 'sense of place' to management debates.

Martin's work is strongly visual, in multi-dimensional ways. Each work in her 4X4 suites operates at larger and smaller scales in the same place. At least one of the set of four is a view from above: a view without a sky. The landscape aesthetic she thus creates is more than the landscape of a single, standing viewer looking toward the horizon (the traditional frame). She also adds the *touch* of place through actual sand and sometimes objects from the site being incorporated into the pigments and structure of the works. She uses her hands as tools, not just the brush, thus literally, *feeling* the landscape. Smell, sound and other senses are more difficult. But the aerial view, the view without the horizon, focuses the eye on detail and texture, and her micro-scale enhances the sense of 'being there'.

Contrast the wonderful aerial photographs by David Taylor of the same landscapes, also included in the *Desert Channels* book. These images, taken from an aeroplane well beyond the place, create a picture of the landscape forms, using natural colour, patterns and form to make the image. The vertical distance ensures that the image is not so much of a

²² See William L. Fox, *Aeriality: On the World from Above* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2009).

²³ Jenny Graham, *Somerset Landscapes: Paintings and Drawings*, (self-published, 2010), 4. Jenny Graham's web page shows her style: <http://www.jennygraham.co.uk>

²⁴ Mandy Martin, "Aesthetic Evaluation as an Environmental Tool," in Robin *et al.*, *Desert Channels*, 161.

personal place, but rather of the ‘extent’ of landscape: these are an outsider’s way in. These two ‘aerial’ art works create very different responses in the viewer. They both, in a sense, reference the well-known traditional Aboriginal art of the western desert, where the view is from above (no horizon). In the case of western desert art, though, the image is just a tool for remembering the story. It is the telling of country that brings it into being, not the aesthetic appreciation.²⁵ Aboriginal art is aural art; the story is the art, while the image is just a means to tell it. But the Aboriginal people who cultivated the Desert Channels landscape first are part of the place today, and Mandy Martin is mindful of this in all her work in subtle ways.²⁶

Biodiversity

The ‘cultural’ in the landscapes of Britain set them apart from the national parks movement that was most influential in the United States, and also prominent in Australia. National parks were places of ‘nature’, places for biodiversity, in today’s parlance. Over the years, these places have been magnets for the study of nature in need of biological conservation, not just in Australia, but in the western world, perhaps most strongly, the United States. Fazey *et al.* have shown that research in leading biological conservation journals is biased towards vertebrates, forests, relatively pristine landscapes, and towards studies of single species and assemblages rather than communities or ecosystems. Especially favoured are biota in areas designated as ‘reserves’ or national parks in first world countries.²⁷

The concept of a wilderness national park was, however, inappropriate for England where even the “remotest areas have long supported some settled population” and the landscape has been “to a significant degree modified by farming or other human uses.” The term ‘national park’ was rejected by the English in the 1930s, but it was revived by Lord Scott in 1942, and redefined by John Dower, an architect and planner, in 1945.²⁸

Dower defined a national park that was acceptable to the people of England and Wales. He was the driving force behind the 1949 *National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act*. He defined national parks first in terms of beauty. They were to be ‘extensive areas’ where “for the nation’s benefit and by appropriate national decision and action: (a) the characteristic landscape beauty is strictly preserved²⁹ (b) access and facilities for public open-air enjoyment are amply provided³⁰ (c) wild life and buildings and places of architectural and historic interest

²⁵ Vivien Johnson, ed., *Papunya Painting: Out of the Desert* (Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2007). Myers, *Pintupi Country*.

²⁶ Where Martin can, she explicitly consults Traditional Owners about what she should or should not paint. She has also painted collaboratively with Aboriginal people in a range of projects. Accessed 11 August 2012, <http://www.mandy-martin.com>.

²⁷ Ioan Fazey, *et al.*, “What Do conservation Biologists Publish?” *Biological Conservation* 124 (2005): 63–73. Ioan Fazey *et al.*, “Who Does All the Research in Conservation Biology?” *Biodiversity & Conservation* 14 (2005): 917–934. The studies were based on publications in the journals *Biological Conservation* (established 1968), *Conservation Biology* (established 1987) and *Biodiversity and Conservation* (established 1992). In terms of ‘expertise’, most papers are quantitative in style (89%), use inferential statistics (63%) and were typically from a single disciplinary tradition. Few were cross-disciplinary (13.6%) or concerned with testing conservation actions (12.6%).

²⁸ UK Parliamentary Papers [Dower Report] *National Parks in England and Wales*, Parliamentary Papers 1944/5, Cmd 6628, v, 283-339. [Scott Report] *Report on Land Utilization in Rural Areas*, 1942, Cmd 6378, paragraph 241.

²⁹ Hence the need for LCA, as explained by Emma-Jane Preece.

³⁰ This was the clause that made the AONB a more attractive option for the Quantocks, as public access was a problem for local communities.

are suitably protected, while (d) established farming use is effectively maintained.”³¹ Dower thus effectively defined a different sort of expertise for national parks managers, which included assessment of landscape beauty, amenity value, wildlife and architectural resources and established farming use. In his model biological science is ‘expert’ in only part of (c), and the other categories need different expertise, including, unsurprisingly, Dower’s own, architecture and planning. In the 1950s, a new category of reserve was established, the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, based on two small sections of the 1949 *Act*. On 9 May 1956, the Quantocks were designated as the first AONB in England.³²

In the same post-war fervour, the international community established the International Union for the Protection of Nature in 1948 (now the IUCN World Conservation Union). This led to discussions among British biologists, including Dudley Stamp and Max Nicholson, about the conservation of nature. Britain established a Nature Conservancy (1949) to enhance efforts in this area, and to meet international obligations. The Nature Conservancy was designed in a way that effectively separated the management of land from the management of wildlife. Scientists in Britain at the time wanted focus on nature conservation ‘wherever it was needed’, and to avoid fraught cultural negotiations about national parks (which were not established in Scotland until the new millennium). The idea of considering nature ‘outside reserves’, in production lands and cities, in a sense anticipated by more than fifty years, current initiatives in Australia. The “essence of nature conservation”, according to Sir Dudley Stamp of the Nature Conservancy in a book published posthumously in 1969, was “to select characteristic examples of habitats and, remembering that they are in greater or lesser degree the result of man’s activities, to maintain them.” Ann and Malcolm MacEwan commented that “scientists saw national parks as a political millstone round the neck of nature conservation.” National parks were heritage, and were managed by architects, archaeologists, and historians. In England, the cultural imperative in national parks was so strong and so ‘emotive’, that it was outside the expertise of biological scientists.³³

In Australia, the story has been very different. Although each state manages its national parks under different legislation, the ‘national parks model’—with its strong focus on ‘nature’ unmodified by humans—has shaped the management practices. Biological scientists have been leaders of national parks management, and biodiversity is a major focus.³⁴ Australia is one of the world’s top ten mega-diverse nations, the only one with a developed economy. It also has the doubtful honour of leading the world in mammalian extinctions over the past century, and has the highest number of threatened species on the planet.³⁵ These are good, measurable reasons for a focus on biodiversity conservation and research. However, they strongly affect the sorts of management practice for lands in public care, and the expertise of managers.

³¹ Dower Report: 6 [288].

³² They were the second AONB—the first was the Gower Peninsula in Wales. The designation was confirmed on 1 January 1957.

³³ Sir Dudley Stamp, *Nature Conservation in Britain* (London: Collins New Naturalist, 1969). 35. Ann and Malcolm MacEwan, *National Parks: Conservation or Cosmetics?* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1982), 17.

³⁴ There have been other leaders too, as recent work shows. But working class campaigners for city national parks are sidelined by the mainstream rhetoric. See Heather Goodall and Allison Cadzow, “The People’s National Park: Working-Class Environmental Campaigns on Sydney’s Georges River, 1950–67,” *Labour History* 99, November (2010): 17–35.

³⁵ David Lindenmayer and Mark Burgman, *Practical Conservation Biology* (Melbourne: CSIRO Publishing, 2005), 1.

While England's regulation of lands places culture central to decision making, Australia's favours nature, as defined by biodiversity conservation. The National Reserves System includes national parks (managed by states), state forests, Indigenous Protected Areas (managed by traditional owners), and private reserves (including those managed by Bush Heritage Australia). The emphasis on biodiversity enables the Federal Government to take an overseeing, rather than a management role in all of these, in keeping with its international obligations. While biodiversity is clearly 'global', cultural heritage is increasingly 'local'. The elements of the Register of the National Estate (established in 1975) have since 2007, become subject formally to the operation of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).³⁶ The Federal Government has supported local 'biodiversity' management alongside other natural resources through regional NRM organisations such as Desert Channels Queensland. It is only in very recent years that 'non-reserves' (the 'matrix') has become regarded as increasingly important to biodiversity conservation. New work on feral animals, noxious weeds and wildfire has encouraged scientists to step away from the hyper-separation of people and non-human nature that is embedded in wilderness politics. The landscape surrounding reserves represents a positive 'heterogeneous matrix' constructed by its varied history, and often more useful to less charismatic animals like lizards, who need open grasslands, as new studies are beginning to show.³⁷ This new science is compatible with the politics that says *people are good for biodiversity*, something advocated by Marcia Langton and other Indigenous activists for many years.³⁸ The need to care for nature is also formally legislated in some states, including Queensland, where large pastoral companies now have a duty of care to wildlife and are supported in making conservation initiatives on their private holdings. Thus production land managers are engaging with biodiversity conservation scientists in discussions about managing nature, and increasingly, biodiversity conservation is requiring more expertise than just biological science.³⁹

Livelihood

In the Quantocks, livelihoods have been explicitly entangled with the concept of 'Outstanding Natural Beauty' since the area was first designated for protection. For many, the historical livelihoods in this place shape the beauty itself. The people who live there now are also concerned about ongoing livelihoods.

In the Desert Channels, the concept of biodiversity and cattle being co-produced on the same land has been a very recent initiative. It is still an experiment, but it could be a way forward that is friendly to both biodiversity and economic futures for people. Large, remote

³⁶ Following amendments to the *Australian Heritage Council Act 2003*, the Register of the National Estate (RNE) was frozen on 19 February 2007, which means that no new places can now be added, or removed. The Register continued as a statutory register until February 2012, and is now a public archive. States and territories take responsibility for heritage under their separate legislative systems. Accessed 11 August 2012, <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/rne/index.html>; National Reserves system, accessed 11 August 2012, <http://www.environment.gov.au/parks/nrs/index.html>.

³⁷ Joern Fischer, David B. Lindenmayer and Ioan Fazey, "Appreciating Ecological Complexity," *Conservation Biology* 18, no. 5 (2004): 1245–1253; Adrian Manning, D. B. Lindenmayer and H. A. Nix, "Continua and Umwelt," *Oikos*, 104, no. 3 (2004): 621–628.

³⁸ Marcia Langton, *Burning Questions: Emerging Environmental Issues for Indigenous Peoples in Northern Australia* (Darwin: Centre for Indigenous Natural and Cultural Resource Management, Northern Territory University, 1998).

³⁹ Guy Fitzhardinge, "Production Lands, Philanthropy and Biodiversity," in Robin et al., *Desert Channels*, 284–299.

ecologically complex places like the Desert Channels also generate personal and community identity, and a collective vision for a local economy and landscape. The remoteness itself generates an independence of thinking. Australian desert ecologist Mark Stafford Smith, who has lived for many years in Alice Springs, one of the world's most remote towns, is promoting an Outback Capital Trust to help both biodiversity and economy throughout Australia's arid regions. It is modelled on the Alaska Permanent Fund (another sparsely populated, vast place). The idea is that the Outback Capital Trust will receive 'natural resource rents' from mining and pastoralism ventures, thus ensuring that these large, broadscale ventures do not simply take profits from these places to global capital markets.⁴⁰

The economic and knowledge capital of remote places is essential to managing nature and culture: corporate memory is irreplaceable when considering diffuse evolutionary processes in the landscape. Stafford Smith argues that the development of 'persistent community local knowledge' is fundamental to both biodiversity and a sense of place.⁴¹ Art is already an important part of the desert economy as people on the ecological edge create distinctive lives and lifestyles. Scientists, as they live and work in such places, become increasingly curious about its literature, its history and its art. The human elements—not just their ecological expertise—become part of their endeavours to sustain life in arid Australia.

Both the Desert Channels and the Quantocks are places that need local communities to manage the values of the land—whether at the level of whole landscapes, in service of international biodiversity agreements or archaeological heritage, or simply for conserving the aesthetics of their personal place. They do not, however, need a global model. The mechanisms and structures that engage communities are often as organic and local as the places themselves: at the very least, they need to acknowledge specifically local livelihoods (past, present and future) as essential reasons for dwelling in a place. Livelihoods will mediate the future of natural and cultural landscapes, of biodiversity and of place itself, not just in places like these which are, in a sense, 'at the margins', but perhaps even more in cities and places where many livelihoods compete in complex ways.

Conclusions

This paper explores some of the many facets of land management for nature in two ecologically and spatially different places. In particular, it explores the role of history and the humanities as a new sort of 'professional expertise' that can contribute to aesthetic and cultural outcomes, and can enable the voices of local people to become more actively engaged in the enterprise. It also critiques the orthodoxies of biodiversity conservation through contrasting (transnational) cases where the 'default' expertise is different, but the aspirations and mechanisms for managing the land for future generations are surprisingly similar.

The comparisons reflect the changing historical role of arts and sciences in understanding nature, perhaps especially since the second half of the twentieth century. The 'expertise' on nature that shapes what is and is not conserved deserves close scrutiny, philosophically and historically. The impetus of management itself is defining both 'experts' and nature in our time, even as nature becomes more and more changed by human activity.

⁴⁰ Mark Stafford Smith and Julian Cribb, *Dry Times: Blueprint for a Red Land* (Melbourne: CSIRO Publishing, 2009), 135-136.

⁴¹ Mark Stafford Smith, "Rangelands," in *Ten Commitments: Reshaping the Lucky Country's Environment*, ed., David Lindenmayer et al. (Melbourne: CSIRO Publishing, 2008), 11-18, esp. 15.

The environments discussed here, a small focused area of England, and a rather bigger, more amorphous area in Australia, of course demand different sorts of expertise. Because of their scale, their settlement patterns, the differences in their biodiversity, and the ways that these elements are framed by different national visions, they have different managers, different experts. They also have very different local people. But beyond these differences, global experts are framing the way environments are seen and valued. The case studies suggest that democratic ‘partnerships’ that include local communities because they are *political* actors can be enriched by regarding these people as themselves ‘experts’ in (their own) place, not merely voters to be appeased. This model requires a broader sense of the nature of expertise and an explicit acknowledgement of the intersections between the local and the global found at nodes such as biodiversity or nature reserves. In particular, the case studies suggest that the representation of the local as nostalgic and sentimental and global as numerate and measurable (and therefore ‘more expert’) is not helpful to policy making or management practice. Managers are well-aware that local expertise is essential to achieving goals (measurable or otherwise) and are looking for ways to engage this. The *Desert Channels* project is a practical idea from the humanities. Writing a book together is, of course, just one of many ways to enrich the local/global conversations that are essential to the preservation of beauty, nature and livelihoods in local landscapes.

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⁴²<http://www.landscape.ac.uk/landscape/research/researchingenvironmentalchange/localplacesglobalprocessesreflectingonenvironmentalchange.aspx> .

⁴³<http://www.stockholmresilience.org/ihope/casestudies/casestudies/expertiseforthefuturehistoriesofenvironmentalpr edictionandpolicy.5.2a759bb41277b00e3c38000345.html>

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