Integrating Landscape-Scale Science with Local-Scale Decision Making: Adaptive governance in large landscape conservation in North America and Australia

Wyborn Carina∗1

1University of Montana (UM) – 32 Campus Drive Missoula Montana, 59801, United States

Abstract

Large landscape conservation initiatives have gained increasing prominence globally. Motivated by the science of conservation biology, these initiatives invoke theoretical ideas from adaptive governance to integrate landscape-scale science with local-scale action. However the many tensions between such scales of decision-making and action posing significant challenges for connecting conservation science with practice. Adaptive governance links diverse actors across multiple scales to address conservation and resource management challenges bridging social and ecological systems. Extending the learning-by-doing approach of adaptive management, adaptive governance considers the broader social and institutional context shaping decision-making. This presentation summarises key findings from an interdisciplinary doctoral dissertation.

Qualitative social science was used to explore the relationship between science and governance in large landscape conservation in a longstanding North American case and an emerging Australian initiative. Despite different social, ecological and institutional contexts, both cases faced similar challenges of coordination and legitimacy. These challenges are traced to a conceptual separation of science and governance and an inability to build relationships to integrate knowledge with action. Their struggles highlight a need to reconceptualise the basic premise of adaptive governance. This presentation will introduce a novel approach that reframes governance as a process of integrating and connecting knowledge with action. This approach integrates science as part of the overarching process of governance rather than an additional (and either neglected or too powerful) part of the picture. By building strong relationships between science and practice, this approach offers a more ethical and effective framework for large landscape conservation and adaptive governance.

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Keywords: adaptive governance, science studies, co, production, biodiversity conservation

∗Speaker