



Theme 2 Socio-cultural Context

Dimensions and networks: informal and formal connections between community-industry-government

The Socio-cultural Context Theme investigates the informal and formal associations among community, industry and government in relation to knowledge formation and its use in decision-making. The Theme aims to identify barriers to adaptive coastal management.

The socio-cultural context of the coastal zone is comprised of social networks and communities of actors who operate within and among formal structures and informal systems, and whose worldviews and values differ widely.



Onkaparinga River mouth, SA.

In essence, the socio-cultural context is the formative setting in which human activity is generated and mediated. This context interacts continually with the biophysical context within which human activity is embedded, thus creating a socio-ecological system. In relation to coastal adaptation, this interaction is characterised by multiple scales, complexity and uncertainty.

Theme 2 explores how institutional structures and cultures, and the social networks among stakeholders

play a role in explaining decision-making about the coastal zone.

Conducted by the Adelaide University and Flinders University, Theme 2 builds on a range of case studies about decisions made for coastal developments across South Australia and explores the social context for decision-making by assessing preparedness of peri-urban regions for sea level rise.

Aims

The research aims of the Socio-cultural Context Theme are to:

- develop a method for exploring the socio-cultural context of coastal management
- identify how and to what extent the current socio-cultural context constrains or enables knowledge transfer/learning between knowledge-makers, such as scientists, and agency decision-makers e.g. state and local governments
- analyse the social networks that surround coastal knowledge- and decision-making and show how they can overcome or modify any constraints to learning and response created by the socio-cultural context.

Design and Methods

The research for Theme 2 is based upon document analysis, social network mapping, and in-depth interviews with the intent to:

- represent a contrast between 'successful' and 'inappropriate' knowledge-policy engagement processes
- analyse the processes that led to the decisions
- analyse the social networks that generated these decisions.

Key Outputs

- A critical analysis of the relationship between the broader socio-cultural context and the specific functioning of the social network and its capacity to influence knowledge systems/policy formation in the coastal zone under study
- A set of guidelines to facilitate adaptive learning through social networks for greater engagement at the knowledge-policy interface.

Understanding the social and cultural context and frameworks in which policy is developed and decisions are made in relation to the uptake of information and application of knowledge is central to resolving the knowledge – governance divide and enabling effective decision-making for climate change.



York Peninsula , SA. Image: N. Harvey

Part of this project examines the role and importance of coastal champions in linking coastal science with coastal policy. It is important to find out how these individuals operate as successful communicators in influencing policy development. This will help planning for effective coastal management in the future.

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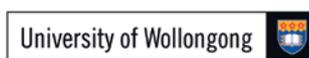
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