

Promoting stewardship to ensure connectedness with the biosphere is a key to sustainability. Connectedness refers to human adaptation and the feedbacks with nature which ultimately affect human well-being. This is a discourse driven by the theory of SESs, whereby humans and nature are tightly coupled entities in a complex and dynamic adaptive system. Stewardship is idealized as the voluntary support of society for nature, physical places and sustainability. The reality of human behaviour, however, is that individuals adapt out of self-interest and constructed rationality which gives meaning to stewardship. Individual meaning can steer collective pathways towards unsustainability through intended or unintended consequences of human-nature interactions. These are often concealed in the complexity of the global sustainability challenge and unscrutinised stewardship theories. In this phenomenological study of stewardship, we aim to explore more critically how individuals' intentions for nature and places affects societies' pathways in the biosphere. We selected a locally representative sample of 35 enthusiastic voluntary nature conservationists in South Africa's Garden Route. We applied a mixed-methods approach to assess differences in meanings and the SES framework to analyse intended and unintended consequences. Prevalent in our study area was a local pathway towards the disconnection of humans and nature, which provokes unsustainability at higher scales. This pathway was supported by a lack of self-responsibility in sustainable adaptation and a perceived role to mitigate in a distant human-nature relationship. This individual meaning to adapt the complex adaptive system is an oxymoron which underpins maladaptive stewardship. This study shows that disconnecting humans from nature drives unsustainability. The role of sustainability agendas is to reflect critically on unintended consequences of stewardship in the public, and to counteract this by re-evaluating the meaning and framing included in motivational strategies.

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Contributed session oral presentation:

### **Home as haven? Why place attachment matters for perceptions of risk**

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Exposed to changing demographic pressures and extreme climatic events, coastal areas offer unique opportunities to study the complexity of adaptation to global changes and the diversity of responses to risk. How populations and individuals act in the face of risk varies widely: rationalist and economic based understandings that focus on information dissemination have proved inadequate in fully understanding why people do or don't perceive and act on risks. Here we use place attachment as a lens through which to understand perceptions of flood hazard at the household scale. We suggest a way of understanding risk that focuses on the different types of meanings people attach to local places and test the relationship between place attachment and risk perception. Our results from an extensive household survey (n=750) in coastal regions in the Languedoc - France, Garden Route - South Africa and in Cornwall- England demonstrate how processes of mobility shape configurations of place attachments, and what this means for social differentiation of risk. We find that groups within the population that hold different types of place attachment differ in their perceptions of the causes and likelihood of flood events. Our analysis shows that using place attachment theory and methods deepens our understanding of the socio-cognitive processes that underpin how humans respond to environmental uncertainty, especially place related risk. In particular our findings are useful for policy makers in communicating flood risk and in understanding why people may choose not to protect themselves from potential flood events.

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