

RESILIENT PEOPLE-RESILIENT REGION: A CASE STUDY IN THE CAPE-TO-CAPE REGION OF SOUTH WEST WA

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Abstract

There are many regions in Australia that are currently experiencing severe environmental and economic stress. A combination of factors such as drought, dry land salinity, climate change, economic downturn and loss of ecosystem health combine to create regions in recession. There have been many research projects devoted to the study of non-resilient regions and governments have provided resources to support regions such as the Murray Darling Basin, the Hunter Valley in NSW and the Sheep-Wheat belt of SW Western Australia. This presentation takes a different approach in that it focuses on a region that is currently not experiencing extreme forms of economic or environmental stress, the Cape-to-Cape Region in SW Western Australia. The special relationship between the characteristics of the people in the region, its biophysical attributes and the types of commercial enterprise undertaken is the primary focus of this case study. A working hypothesis for ongoing research is that the Cape-to-Cape region, in the colonial phase of its environmental history, has attracted humans with identifiable values and attitudes that are alternative to the mainstream. Further, it is these values and attitudes, particularly centred on a strong (endemic) sense of place and pro-nature-based enterprises (organic agriculture and retail, ecotourism, retail health foods including restaurants) that are vitally linked to the resilience and sustainability outcomes achieved so far. Such personal and culturally embedded values are the foundations for a resilient region and they offer diverse options for adaptation in the face of pressures such as population increase and further climate change.

Biography

Glenn Albrecht undertakes internationally relevant transdisciplinary research in the domain of sustainability and ecosystem health and has also produced research papers/publications in environmental history, transdisciplinarity, sustainability, environmental politics, environmental and animal ethics. Professor Albrecht has publications in international refereed journals where the focus of his work has been complexity in relation to human and ecosystem health. In 2001, with co-authors, he produced a major international publication: *Health Social Science: A Transdisciplinary and Complexity Perspective* (Oxford University Press). His most recent publications have presented the new concept of 'solastalgia', a form of human distress related to the lived experience of negatively perceived environmental change. This concept is now well established and produces, in a Google search, over 5,000 hits in many languages. Glenn Albrecht has been interviewed, nationally and internationally, by radio, television and print journalists about the concept of solastalgia particularly in the context of industrial development, mining, drought and climate change. His recent ARC funded research projects include a collaborative study into the relationship between human and ecosystem health in the coal mining region of the Upper Hunter of NSW. Current ARC funded research projects include, the geographies and bioethics of the thoroughbred horse industry and ecological footprint analysis for policy makers. In 2008, along with colleagues Linda Connor and Nick Higginbotham he has commenced a four year Australian Research Council Discovery Project to study the lived experience of climate change, using the Hunter Valley as a case study. New initiatives at Murdoch include a "resilient regions" research project.