

KATRINA MARGARET PROUST
Résumé

Applied historian
Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies
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EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Australian National University

Doctor of Philosophy in resource management and environmental science. PhD Thesis: *Learning from the Past for Sustainability: Towards an Integrated Approach* (2004).

The University of Sydney

- Master of Letters in Public Archaeology (Cultural Conservation). MLitt Project: *The Physical Legacy of European Colonisation in the Asia-Pacific Region* (a survey of the potential of public archaeology to demonstrate this legacy, studying selected sites in Fiji, Sri Lanka and Malaysia).
- Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Laws.

RESEARCH INTERESTS

My research interests lie in the fields of applied and environmental history, natural resource use and management, and urbanism and health. They operate on both a methodological and an applied level.

On the methodological level I have developed an approach which integrates concepts from the practice of history, from theories of feedback dynamics, and from models of the cognitive adaptation process. I apply this conceptual framework to studies of human-environment systems, particularly studies of current NRM situations where policies have failed to take account of the historical and dynamical issues that characterise human-environment relationships. My approach emphasises the importance of feedback in human-environment relationships, and the essential role of historical data in understanding the dynamics of these systems.

On the applied level I have used this approach to examine the socio-biophysical factors that influenced irrigation development since the 1890s in south-eastern Australia, and to trace the growth of understanding of irrigation salinity in that context.

I recently completed a 12-month collaborative research project on the ACT water system for ActewAGL, the Territory's water manager. The aim of this work was to develop an initial view of the interplay between the socio-biophysical variables that can affect the resilience and sustainability of the ACT water system in the face of climate change. The study was designed to promote an integrative discussion of system structure and dynamical effects. In the final report we suggested integrative research projects that could lead to a better understanding of the way that water management strategies and policies affect the resilience and sustainability of Canberra and the surrounding regions. Starting in September 2006 I will undertake an initial two-month study for Land and Water Australia on the interconnections between climate, energy and water.

As an applied historian I focus on (a) the use and assessment of historical sources, and in the methods and critical processes of historical research, and (b) systems principles, particularly feedback dynamics, that are essential in the study of complex human-environment systems. The insights from applied history come from a blending of these two areas of understanding.

OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Occasional lecturing at the Australian National University in:

- Water Resource Management Program, on the historical legacies of the development of Australia's water resources, and
- Sustainable Systems, Human Ecology Program, running workshops on system approaches and techniques with which to explore feedback behaviour in human-environment settings.

I ran an interactive session with 150 delegates at the 2006 Fenner Conference on systems thinking in the context of urbanism, environment and health.

From my PhD research one conference paper, two journal papers, one entry on the Bright Sparcs web database, and three papers in preparation for journals.

Completion of numerous heritage conservation studies for conservation management plans in respect of places with heritage significance in New South Wales.

Numerous talks to community groups in New South Wales (and one on Penang Island) as a volunteer (for National Trust of Australia) on matters related to heritage conservation and historical archaeology.

Archaeological fieldwork in New South Wales, Northern Territory and the United Arab Emirates.

Six years as Secretary of the Anglo-Australian Telescope Board in Sydney.

Three years in legal practice in Sydney.

TRAVEL

I have travelled widely in Australia, Britain, Europe, the Pacific and South Asia since the 1970s. This has included travel associated with professional meetings in Britain; attending conferences in Britain, Sri Lanka, Bulgaria and Norway; archival historical research in France and England; archaeological fieldwork in the United Arab Emirates; archaeological site visits in Sri Lanka, Penang Island and Norfolk Island; as well as holidays in several countries including Greece and Italy.

REFEREE

Professor Stephen Dovers, Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, the Australian National University, Canberra, dovers@cres.anu.edu.au, phone 6125 0669.