

## Values Mapping: A tool to assist in conserving native vegetation

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### Abstract

**Values mapping** was developed in business marketing to assist companies to define their own direction and to position themselves in the marketplace.

As McCracken (1999) identifies in her work, shared values are important in “gaining and maintaining a common focus and implementing work systems that maintain high involvement, balance the chaos often created by perpetual change, and apply appropriate technology”. These are outcomes that we seek when we strive to achieve conservation of native vegetation within production landscapes.

McCracken goes on to discuss two types of values – those that “define the principles that guide ethical behaviour”, helping to establish a culture and create shared expectations, and those that provide guidelines for evaluation of alternatives that impact on organisational performance. Just as values are central to decision-making and behaviour in business, they are also central to co-operative management of natural resources. McCracken’s emphasis on the importance of investing time and effort in identifying shared values among members of the workforce who come from different disciplines is equally well directed to native vegetation management.

By combining **consensus-building strategies** with the marketing approach to **values mapping**, Community Solutions has established a tool for dialogue between stakeholders from different sectors. Beginning with maps of the area, the values mapping process allows interested group representatives and key individuals to identify visually what they value about the place, and what threatens those values, without complete reliance on language which is value-laden and often specific to a particular sector.

This presentation will explore the critical aspects of how values mapping assisted by a facilitator skilled in consensus-building, has been used to identify values, threats and possible shared actions for conservation of habitat in shorebird sites of national significance in rural areas of Australia. The paper also discusses how these same strategies can be applied to native vegetation management.

**Key words:** Values mapping, consensus-building, native vegetation

## **Introduction**

When we begin to think about the role and values of native vegetation, it is important that we consider from whose perspective these considerations are being addressed.

Big questions such as ‘who pays’, ‘how we balance conservation and production’, ‘what we are doing about threats’, and ‘whether we are making a difference, for better or for worse’, and the answers to these questions are often very different depending on the place that an individual occupies in the landscape and lifestyles that interact with the native vegetation under consideration.

### **Values: What role do they play?**

As McCracken (1999) identifies in her work, shared values are important in “gaining and maintaining a common focus and implementing work systems that maintain high involvement, balance the chaos often created by perpetual change, and apply appropriate technology”. Social values are a fundamental driver of many of the decisions we make.

As long ago as the 1970s American psychologist Milton Rokeach (1973) defined ‘values’ as

- Beliefs (such as honesty);
- Conceptions of, preferences for and prescriptions about desirable modes of conduct or established orientations towards living and existence (such as hard work);
- Conceptions of, preferences for and prescriptions about desirable end-states of existence and social ideals (such as status, health, peace etc)

Values are both determined by and reflective of our experiences in and responses to, the world in which we live. As Watson (undated) identifies, values “capture the deeper motivations behind human behaviour, tendencies of thought and feelings – unconscious as well as conscious – and the intra-personal and interpersonal dynamics related to them”.

While values are largely developed in response to our experiences in our younger years, they are not immutable, and can be shaped both by significant personal experiences and by external events.

For several years now governments at both state and national level have both expected and required people from different sectors of the community to come together to plan and implement natural resource and environmental management strategies. Project funding is frequently dependent on demonstrating ‘partnerships’ and ‘collaboration’. Regional planning that underpins the distribution of funding from major programs such as the National Action Plan for Salinity & Water Quality and the Natural Heritage Trust requires a regional approach in which interested parties come together to plan for reversal of land degradation, conservation of biodiversity, improved water quality and river flows, and protection of coastal areas and their catchments. In all of these issues native vegetation is a key factor.

The people who must come together to address these often complex and difficult issues come to the task with a diversity of backgrounds, life experiences, training and, perhaps most importantly value sets.

### **Exploring our different ‘realities’**

Using tools that enable those brought together in native vegetation management processes to explore the role of ‘native vegetation’ in mutually understood ways is important in building shared outcomes.

Let us consider for a moment what an image of scattered trees across a rural landscape in the wheat-sheep belt conveys to participants from different sectors.



Fig. 1 Perceptions of trees in a landscape influence how we value them  
(Photos by Geoff Tonkin)

Do the wheat-farmer, the Department of Primary Industries agronomist, the wildlife biologist and the Greening Australia Project Officer in the district all see the same thing when they look at these trees?

And what of the coastal strip adjoining a nationally significant marine wetland? Does the native vegetation there mean the same thing to the international shorebird research scientist, the WWF-based National Shorebird Conservation Officer, the local dairy-farmer whose property abuts the shoreline, and the aquaculturist whose oyster production depends on the water quality in the area? How do these values compare with those of the regional NRM coordinator? Do they each see the same role for this native vegetation, and as a consequence attach the same values to it?



Fig. 2 What values do individuals attach to coastal wetland native vegetation?  
(Photo: Jane Elix)

## **The role of language in valuing native vegetation**

While both life experiences and current lifestyle clearly influence how each of the participants values native vegetation, language also plays an important part in building the shared understanding and trust needed to move forward together. Anna Carr (2002), in her work on environmental stewardship, highlights the importance of speaking a common language. Scott & Seis address this issue in greater detail in their paper (this workshop).

## **Visual imagery**

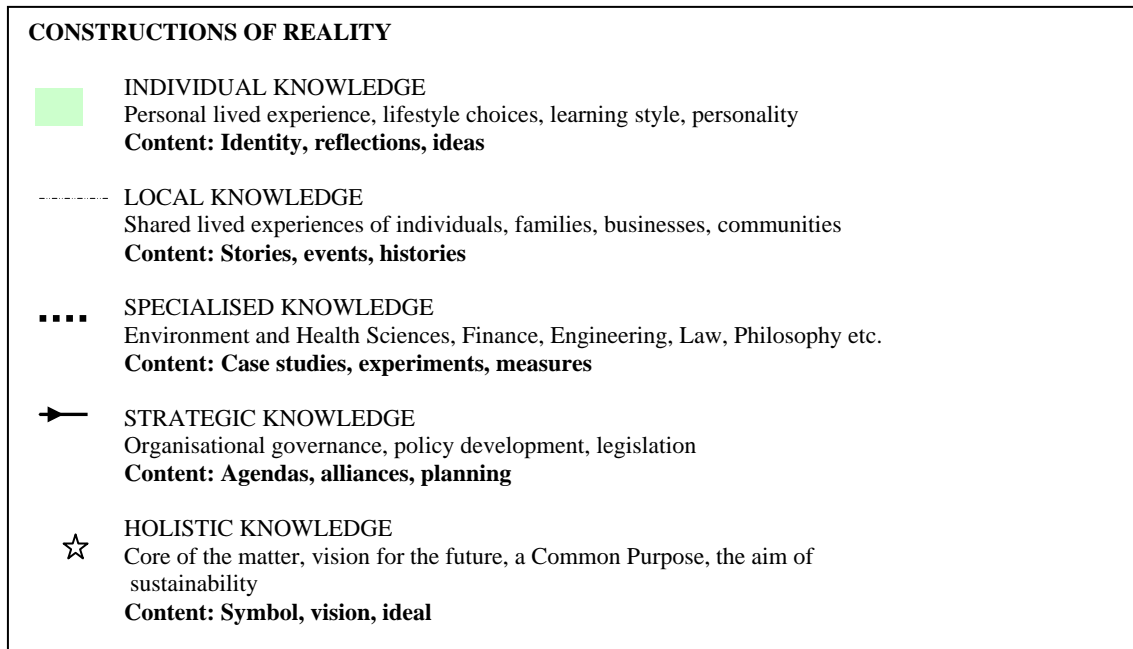
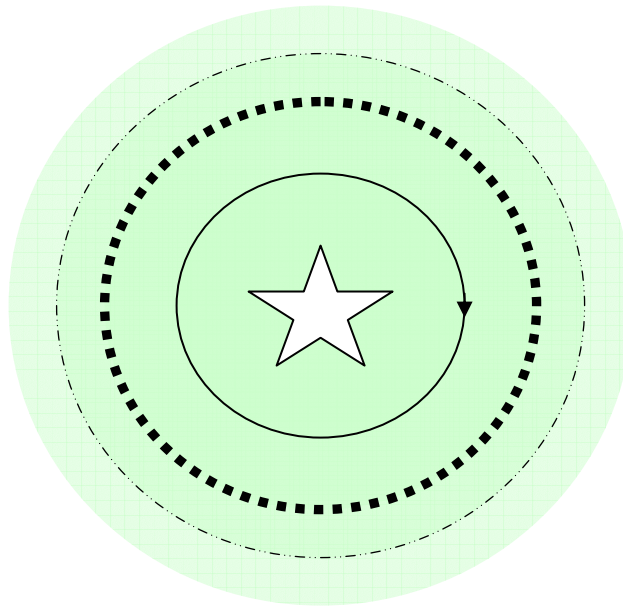
Visual imagery plays an important part in our perceptions, and in turn influences how we value things. Nowhere is this more starkly illustrated than in the differing ways in which Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians view landscape, a factor that is also reflected in the ways in which Aboriginal and European artists depict the landscape and its vegetation. The paper by Jodie Smith and her colleagues (Atyeo et al, this conference) provides an example of the scientific imagery attached to native vegetation.

## **Recognising & respecting different ‘ways of knowing’**

That participants from the different sectors will bring to native vegetation management different ways of knowing is well documented, yet these differences are often overlooked. US-based environmental mediator Adler and his colleagues highlight the fact that “By itself, scientific and technical knowledge is neither a ‘be-all’ nor ‘end-all’ in environmental conflicts”. Adler goes on to say that “Many lay people think science is conducted wholly in the realm of testable knowledge. Scientific methodology stresses experimentation and quantifiable conclusions: observation, hypothesis, experiment, and conclusions. Subjective knowledge, however, plays a larger role than many people know or than scientists will often admit to. Past experiences, intuition, hunches, values about what is important to know, and even bidding/betting processes like ‘Monte Carlo’ analysis often enter into the scientific process, particularly in framing questions for research and data collection.”

Adler and his colleagues identify among the different types of knowledge brought to the table ‘traditional’ knowledge, ‘cultural’ knowledge, ‘local’ knowledge, and ‘remembered’ knowledge, and they see each as having a legitimate place in the process.

Professor Val Brown,(2004) in her work on linking knowledge cultures to sustainability and health, captures the different ways of knowing as ‘local community’ ‘specialised’, and ‘organisational/strategic’ knowledges, which she describes as “constructed in different social systems with different languages and different interpretations of the same reality”, and “bookended” by ‘individual’ and ‘holistic’ knowledge. In a similar vein, Millar & Curtis (1998) demonstrate the importance in natural resource management of ‘farmer knowledge’ based strongly on personal experience, observation and inherited knowledge.



**Fig. 3 NESTED KNOWLEDGES**  
 (Adapted from Brown V.A. & Pitcher J. Islands and Beaches: Negotiating community knowledges in the transition to sustainability. In: Keen M., Brown V.A. & Dyball R. (eds). *Social Learning in Environmental Management*. Earthscan UK, 2005).

## **Consensus-based Values Mapping: A tool for building dialogue & shared understanding**

Values Mapping is a technique developed in business marketing to assist a company to define its own direction and to position itself in the marketplace. Community Solutions has adapted the business approach to Values Mapping as a tool to enable dialogue between stakeholders from different sectors. Beginning with maps of the area in which environmental, land use or natural resource planning is required, the Values Mapping process allows interested group representatives and key individuals to identify visually what they value about the place, without complete reliance on language specific to that sector.

This values identification process is combined with a strategic approach adopted from mediation and consensus-building. Background research, telephone networking within the local community, surveys, an Issues Paper, values mapping focus groups, and a facilitated workshop directed to achieving shared outcomes and commitments to implementation are all used in varying combinations tailored to the needs of the people involved.

As Adler et al (undated) make clear, a degree of flexibility is an important aspect of consensus-building. However, these authors provide a useful template from which to begin.

- A. Gain substantive knowledge – of the issues, language and terminology
- B. Undertake pre-case consultation – of the key players, groups and interests, and the resources available to complete the work
- C. Scoping and conflict analysis – using observation, secondary sources and interviews with the parties involved.
- D. Designing the process – helping the parties to assess financial and time investment needed and the information needed.
- E. Conducting initial meetings – with clear ground rules, definition of topics involved and learning about each other's interests.
- F. Structuring and managing discussions – managing complex issues discussions and assisting the various parties to contribute equitably, identifying risk and precautions as the process progresses
- G. Assisting experts to clarify scientific and technical inputs – bridging the gap between different types of knowledge and helping each to understand the other's perspective.
- H. Negotiate and facilitate problem-solving – let the natural mediators' in a group do what they do best and avoid traditional 'trade-offs' in favour of 'livable solutions'
- I. Working towards agreement-making and implementation – helping parties to understand when they have sufficient agreement to go ahead and negotiate solutions, recognising the importance of flexible and adaptive agreements.

This may seem like a lengthy process requiring substantial commitment of time and resources, but it can largely be tailored to the situation. Depending on the significance of the native vegetation and other natural resources involved and the benefits of achieving lasting outcomes to which the majority of participants are committed, it will generally be a commitment well-made.

### **The facilitator**

Galvovic, Dukes & Lynott (1999) identify six characteristics which they see as indicative of "the consummate environmental mediator", who is both ethical and effective. These qualities which are either innate or the product of years of development built on both training and experience are:

1. Advocacy for sustainable development.
2. Environmental [and rural] literacy, that is, familiarity with the language and substance of environmental science, public policy [and rural communities].
3. Significant life experience.
4. Commitment, integrity and trustworthiness.

5. The ability to adopt different dispute resolution styles and behaviours.
6. Superb planning and organisational capacity.

Elix (2003a) identifies in her consideration of ‘success’ in public policy dispute interventions, that while impartiality (i.e. freedom from favouritism or bias) and neutrality (i.e. not acting to support one party over another) in the facilitator or mediator are expected, these are perhaps less significant than the ability to be flexible, improvisational and reflexive.

In Values Mapping, whether applied to native vegetation management or other natural resource management issues, the facilitator will often fulfill a role as ‘cultural translator’ – interpreting the different languages, facilitating shared perceptions of the landscape, and building shared understanding of the value sets that underpin these.

### **Addressing a clash of values – values mapping**

As Elix (2003b) highlights in another work on public policy dispute resolution, several researchers have identified a clash of values as one of the underpinning reasons for intractable conflict. The aim of the Values Mapping processes used successfully by Community Solutions in WWF shorebird habitat conservation projects and elsewhere is to

- make the range of values held by the various stakeholders transparent, using visual imagery and facilitation informed by consensus-building strategies
- improve communication between the various stakeholders, avoiding entrenched positions that might arise because of differing use of language and the values that attach to it
- change participants’ perceptions of the available alternatives and the transactional costs of them, avoiding ‘win-lose’ trade-offs and restoring some balance into the discussion
- change individual perceptions of self within the community, and the personal values that attach to that perception
- provide a context for shared planning and future management in ways that take account of the ‘Big Questions’ raised by this conference.

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