

The governance of local climate commons

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I, Suzanne Dunford, declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Masters in Sustainable Futures, in the Faculty of Transdisciplinary Innovation at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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Self-interest is for the past. Common interests are for the future
David Attenborough 2020

Abstract

As climate change impacts accelerate, there is an urgent need to understand and enhance the governance of climate change adaptation, or existing vulnerabilities will be exacerbated, and opportunities to accrue benefits from adaptive responses may be lost.

While a global phenomenon, climate change is experienced locally, varying significantly from place to place, and requiring local and context-specific adaptations. Using lenses of social ecological systems, common pool resources and subsidiarity, this thesis identifies attributes of governance that can support local and sub-local capacity to anticipate, adapt and address local climate change impacts on ecological and social systems.

Set in the Waverley Local Government Area, I examine how urban trees and vegetation, accessible to both public and private interests, represent a local climate commons that providing climate adaptation benefits such as heat regulation, to residents, visitors and ecological communities.

This mixed methods study draws on empirical evidence of community attitudes, document analysis and an extensive review of adaptation literature. It finds that by deepening the application of subsidiarity to existing institutional and governance arrangements, shared management of local climate commons can be achieved. Furthermore, it will promote and foster the diversity in approaches necessary to provide the best chance for successful transferability of inclusive, accountable and effective climate change adaptation.