

Transformation from Conflict to Coexistence with Large Carnivores in Social-Ecological Landscapes

By Louise Boronyak

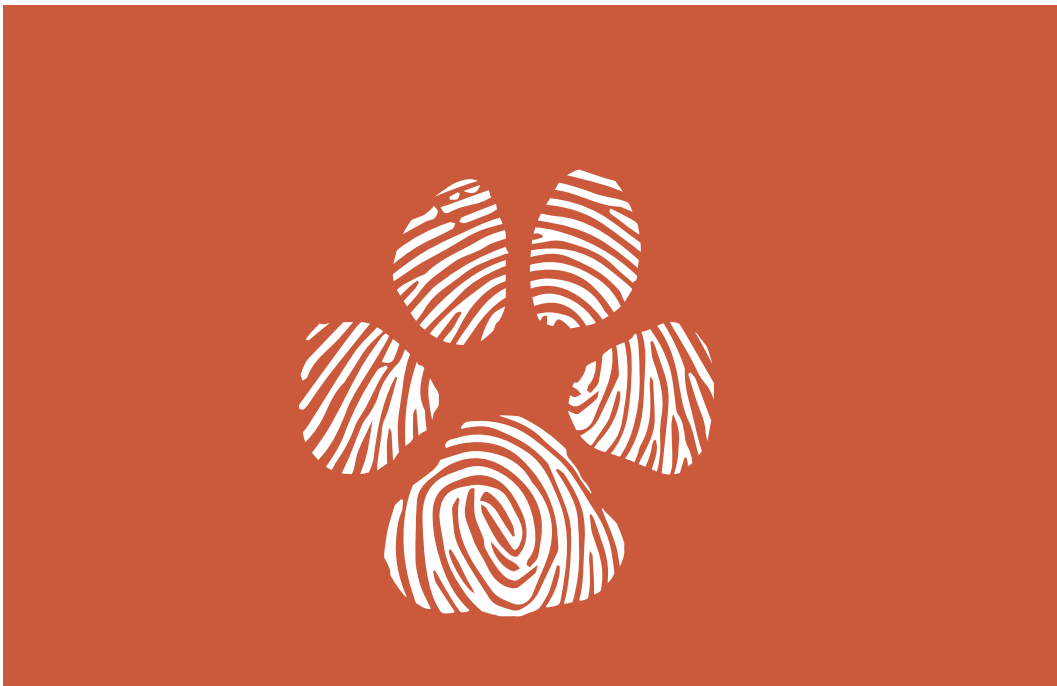


Table of Contents

List of Tables.....	4
List of Figures.....	5
Thesis abstract	6
Acknowledgments	7
Certificate of original authorship.....	8
List of publications included in this thesis and statement of contribution	9
Chapter 1: Introduction	12
1.1 The challenge of coexisting with large carnivores	12
1.2 Research objectives	14
1.3 Scope and contribution of this thesis	14
1.4 Research Questions	16
1.6 Thesis structure	16
1.6 Summary.....	20
Chapter 2: Literature review.....	21
2.1 Social-Ecological Systems.....	21
2.1.1 The relationship between humans and ecological systems.....	23
2.1.2 Human induced changes to the environment.....	23
2.1.3 Conserving wildlife in agricultural landscapes	24
2.2 Human-Carnivore Interactions	27
2.2.1 Human-Carnivore conflict	29
2.2.2 Human dingo conflict and coexistence: An Australian case study.....	30
2.2.3 What is the financial cost of living alongside dingoes?.....	32
2.2.4 Finding ways to coexist with large carnivores.....	33
2.2.5 Evidence for non-lethal preventive innovations	34
2.1 Farmer adoption of preventive innovations	35
2.1.1 Agricultural extension.....	36
2.1.1 Farmer adoption theory	36
2.1.1 Factors that influence farmer adoption	38
2.2 Transformative change in Social-Ecological Systems	39
2.2.1 Spheres of Transformation.....	40
2.3 Identification of gaps in the literature	42
Chapter 3: Methods	43
3.1 Research questions	43
3.2 Theoretical Frameworks.....	43
3.2.1 Social-Ecological Systems	44
3.2.2 Leverage points for system transformation	45
3.2.3 Phases and subprocesses in Social-Ecological System transformation.....	46
3.2.4 Multi-Layer Perspective of Socio Technical Transitions	47
3.3 Research Methodology	47

3.3.1	Country case studies.....	49
3.3.2	Data collection process.....	50
3.3.3	Stage 1: Data collection for South Africa case study.....	56
3.3.1	Stage 2: Data collection for western United States case study	57
3.3.2	Stage 3: Data collection for Australian case study	59
3.4	Data analysis	59
3.6	Ethical considerations	61
<i>Chapter 4: Transitioning towards human – large carnivore coexistence in extensive grazing systems</i>		62
4.1	Introduction.....	63
4.2	Reasons to Transition toward Human- Carnivore Coexistence.....	64
4.3	Discussion.....	66
4.4	Conclusions.....	69
<i>Chapter 5: Pathways towards coexistence with large carnivores in production systems</i>		70
5.1	Introduction.....	71
5.2	Methods.....	73
5.3	Results.....	74
5.4	Discussion.....	80
5.5	Conclusions.....	84
<i>Chapter 6: Ahead of the herd - What distinguishes predator-smart from conventional livestock producers?.....</i>		85
6.1	Introduction	86
6.2	Methods	89
6.3	Results	90
6.3.1	Barriers in the practical sphere	91
6.3.2	Barriers in the political sphere.....	92
6.3.3	Barriers and enablers in the personal sphere	100
6.4	Discussion	104
	Socio-cultural barriers.....	104
	Institutional barriers	105
	Economic barriers	106
	Transformations in the personal sphere	108
6.5	Conclusions	110
<i>Chapter 7: Unlocking lethal dingo management in Australia.....</i>		111
7.1	Introduction	111
7.2	Methods	113
7.3	Results	114
	Practices to mitigate dingo predation	114
	Barriers in the practical sphere.....	115
	Barriers in the political sphere.....	115
	Transformation in the personal sphere	125

7.4	Discussion	130
7.6	Conclusions	137
Chapter 8: Discussion of key findings		139
8.1	Contribution of the thesis.....	139
8.2	Thesis findings	142
8.2.1	Barriers to the adoption of preventive innovations.....	142
8.2.2	Overarching leverage points to create transformation in extensive grazing.....	146
8.2.3	Pathways towards coexistence with dingoes in Australia	151
8.3	Limitation of the thesis	159
8.4	Future directions.....	160
Chapter 9: Conclusions		162
9.1	Rationales for human-carnivore coexistence	163
9.2	Pathways towards human-carnivore coexistence	164
9.3	Barriers to the adoption of preventive innovations	165
9.4	Predator Smart Farming	165
9.5	Leverage points for coexistence	167
Reference list		168
Appendix 1: Interview guide.....		191
	Interview questions for livestock producers	191
	Interview questions for government representatives	193
	Interview questions for conservation and animal protection NGOs and researchers.....	194

List of Tables

Table 1: Span of Human-wildlife interactions	28
Table 2: Components of inquiry process enhancing trustworthiness.....	49
Table 3: Stakeholder group description and number interviewed	52
Table 4: Classification of stakeholders interviewed in South Africa and totals	57
Table 5: Classification of stakeholders interviewed in the US and totals	57
Table 6: Classification of stakeholders interviewed in Australia and totals.....	59
Table 7: Thesis contribution to phases of transformation within Social-Ecological Systems ...	140

List of Figures

Figure 1: Graphical depiction of thesis contribution to phases of transformation within Social-Ecological Systems	18
Figure 2: Categories of Ecosystem Services.....	22
Figure 3: Cycle of conflict between humans and dingoes.....	30
Figure 4: The stages of farmer adoption of practices or technologies	37
Figure 5: Depiction of an enabling environment to mainstream adoption of preventive innovations	39
Figure 6: Leverage points for system transformation based on (Meadows 1999) and their relationship to the practical, political and personal spheres of transformation	40
Figure 7: shown as figure 1: A conceptual model of transformation for extensive rangelands grazing.....	72
Figure 8: shown as figure 2: A model of transformative change in extensive grazing systems in South Africa.	74
Figure 9: shown as figure 2: A model of transformative change in extensive grazing systems in western United States.	77
Figure 10: Scope of Predator Smart Farming versus Predator Friendly Farming.....	87
Figure 11: Barriers to preventive non-lethal innovations across three nested spheres	91
Figure 12: Pathways from conflict to coexistence with dingoes.....	152

Thesis abstract

Agriculture and biodiversity conservation are both vitally important human enterprises, yet they are often in conflict. Animal agriculture has been implicated in species loss and the degradation of ecosystems due to land clearing, overgrazing, and conflicts with wildlife. This thesis explores transformation from human-carnivore conflict towards coexistence in rangeland ecosystems where the commercial livestock production occurs. Coexistence provides a powerful way to reframe the relationship between humans and wildlife. Drawing on empirical evidence from field observations and semi-structured interviews with livestock producers, conservation researchers, grazing industry representatives and policy makers in Australia, South Africa and the United States of America I developed case studies of coexistence in each country. This thesis documents evidence-based non-lethal solutions to protect livestock and large carnivores; informs innovative policies and practices; and identifies critical pathways towards coexistence in ways that are beneficial for people, animals, and the natural world.

My thesis offers five key insights to support transformation towards coexistence. Firstly, it emphasises the urgent need to address human-carnivore conflict in extensive grazing enterprises. As conflict contributes to the global decline in large carnivores and secondary extinctions; it undermines human social cohesion; and it drives violence towards wildlife. Secondly, transformation towards human-carnivore coexistence in rangelands is achievable via pathways identified in this thesis. These pathways center on adoption of preventive non-lethal innovations supported by a new farming movement called Predator Smart Farming that balances livestock grazing and wildlife conservation values to unlock the resilience of landscapes, animals (domesticated and wild) and livelihoods. Other important pathways include research, capacity building, outreach and support for preventive non-lethal innovations; partnerships between livestock producers, experts and government and non-government organisations; institutional and cultural change; and compensation and marketing programs. Thirdly, I build on knowledge from international best practice to present pathways that facilitate adoption of Predator Smart Farming for Australian grazing enterprises. Fourthly, I explore the barriers that impede adoption of coexistence tools and practices across socio-cultural, institutional, and economic sectors. Lastly, I identify strategic leverage points to catalyse transformation towards human-carnivore coexistence by challenging the current lethal carnivore control paradigm, reforming wildlife policy and cultivating a consciousness for coexistence. Coexistence is an action, a worldview, or a destination that orients us towards living alongside wildlife in ways that are respectful, mutualistic and peaceful.

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Certificate of original authorship

I, Louise Boronyak, declare that this thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy in Sustainable Futures 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. This research is supported by the Australian Government Research Training Program.

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