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MUCH SAID, MUCH TO BE DONE

A Field Collaboration between Scientists and Visual Artists about Contested Landscapes in Western Sydney

JOHN REID, ANTHONY G. CAPON AND JANE DIXON

Abstract

The Australian National University (ANU) School of Art Field Study programme is a well-researched and pedagogically awarded procedure for artist engagement with community for the production of visual art about the environment. In 2009, researchers from the ANU National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, then under the aegis of Professor Tony McMichael, collaborated with a field study programme to inform artists who were inspired to produce visual aesthetic imagery to raise community awareness about the contested landscapes of Western Sydney. Unexpectedly, awareness was also raised about the scholarly relationships that evolved between the artists and the scientists. This chapter recounts these developments, leading to the conclusion that the artists opened the minds of the scientists to a more nuanced, and yet in some ways more disturbing, contestation.

The Merits of the Idea

Professor Tony McMichael, Director of the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health (NCEPH) at ANU, took his seat at the Centre's Lunchtime Seminar, as he had done many times. On this occasion, 15 September 2011, the speakers were John Reid, ANU School of Art, and Tony Capon and Jane Dixon, both from NCEPH. The seminar, titled 'The Artist, the Scientist, a Basin and a Recipe', outlined a collaboration between scientists and visual artists to raise

community awareness about the contested landscapes in the western part of the Sydney basin, and the implications of these contests for the health and well-being of both people and planet.

The event pulled together several threads of activity. One of them was Tony McMichael's support for collaborative relationships between NCEPH and the creative arts. Also discernable in the collaborative fabric was the touch of Allen Kearns from the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), who facilitated the financial viability of the enterprise through a CSIRO Flagship Collaboration Fund grant.

The collaboration itself had its origins in May 2009 at an ANU forum for academics from NCEPH and the ANU Fenner School for Environment and Society to explore further potential for environmental research initiatives. Tony Capon and Jane Dixon were there, as was John Reid – brought into the orbit of Fenner School academic life by its then Director, Professor Will Steffen. At the forum, Reid outlined a programme that he had developed at the ANU School of Art called 'Field Studies', which facilitated student artist contact in field locations with scientists and community informants, to inspire the production of visual aesthetic imagery in response to prevailing environmental issues. The art folios generated by the programme meet both the curriculum requirements of the artists involved and, through the public exhibition of the folios, a community appetite for a cultural response to the environmental issues that they faced. 'Might a Field Study', Tony Capon enquired, 'focus on the contests across Western Sydney between housing, agriculture, roads and industry?' The merits of the idea were immediately apparent.

ANU School of Art *ArtForum*

In October 2009, an ANU School of Art *ArtForum* was held to canvas the appeal of this potential study with the school community. Capon and Dixon were joined by David Mason, NSW Department of Primary Industries, to expound the theme for a 2010 Field Study based on their current research activity in Western Sydney. This would provide scholarly reference material to inform artist field observations and assist visual interpretation. All three gave a passionate account of the contested landscapes of Western Sydney.

Tony Capon outlined the broader context of urban agriculture, and its relevance to cities like Sydney.

Historically, Australia has been a food-rich country – a net food exporter. We currently export up to 80% of our production of two commodities, wheat and meat, and, until recently, Australia was self-sufficient

in almost all nutritionally important food groups. However, free trade and other market 'forces' (rather than lack of sufficient fertile areas or climatic suitability) have seen the increasing loss of this capacity, so that today, we import a significant quantity of foods which are important for dietary diversity, including fruit, vegetables and fish.

Australian agriculture will be hit early and hard by climate change. The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) estimates agricultural production could decline by up to 10% by 2030 and 19% by 2050, due to climate change. Some researchers, such as Julian Cribb (2010), are now asking a new question: could a combination of vulnerabilities – climate change, population growth and the loss of niche agricultural production – make Australia a comparatively food-poor country in the future?

We tend to think there is plenty of space to grow food in Australia; however, only 6% of the continent is suitable for intensive agricultural production. Most cities develop in places that have been relatively fertile and watered. As cities grow, much of this arable land has been built on; the little that remains is at risk from further urban development, driven in part by Australia's population growth, one of the highest in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Urban planners are beginning to highlight the value of planning for food security, noting that once land is lost to urban development, it is almost impossible to regain for food growing purposes (Noble 2008).

Urban agriculture – both commercial and civic agriculture – has a health and social value (Mason and Docking, 2005). Civic agriculture includes growing food in community gardens, backyards, on verandas and in the street. Its health benefits can include nutrition, exercise, social interaction, cultural exchange and mental well-being.

The future of Australia's eastern seaboard is a case in point. The coastal strip from Nowra to Noosa, between the Great Dividing Range and the Pacific Ocean, is a rapidly urbanising landscape. Already, 40% of the Australian population lives along this coastal strip – more than 8 million people. By 2050, it is likely that 15 million or more will live there. This narrow strip of land – about 1000 km in length – contains some of Australia's best agricultural land and (currently) has reasonably good and reliable rainfall. And, it is home to a rich diversity of natural fauna and flora.

In the interest of future food security and health, we should think strategically about land use along this strip. How can we house, feed and

move people in healthy and sustainable ways? International experience is instructive. Urban growth boundaries have been used to protect agricultural land in Canada and the USA.

The experience of Cuba during its 'special period' – 1989–2000, after the collapse of the socialist bloc – is also particularly interesting from a health perspective. During this time, a large number of urban food gardens emerged in Cuban cities in response to reduced food imports. Daily per capita food energy intake reduced. Levels of physical activity increased because there was less oil available to power machines and motorised transport. In 2007, measurable health benefits were reported in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*. Obesity rates declined by 50%, and total deaths fell by 18% (Franco et al., 2007). Of course, we would not wish for such a trade and economic crisis here in Australia; however, there are lessons for a resource-constrained future.

Our future food security and health depends on wise land-use planning. It is good to see land-use contests on the city fringe are prominent in the recent review of Sydney's metropolitan plan. The precautionary principle would have us protect our limited supply of agricultural land from further urban expansion.

Tony then introduced the background to the scientific study:

In order to more thoroughly examine these issues, one of seven CSIRO-funded projects will adopt a case study approach based in Western Sydney, the fastest growing urban region in Australia during the 1990s. The project team is to concentrate its efforts on identifying the present and near-term threats (20 years) to foods being produced and processed in the Sydney Basin.

The students were provided with a description of the scientific team's background research, which revealed how much land had been re-zoned away from agricultural purposes toward housing development and services, including extensive road networks¹ (Edwards et al., 2011; Mason et al., 2011), with significant implications for farmer/grower numbers and locally produced fruit and vegetable yields in particular (Malcolm and Fahd, 2009).

David Mason followed by providing insights, not only as a public servant working in primary industries over several decades but also as a chronicler of the region's agricultural history, possibly preceding European settlement

1 Early on, NCEPH PhD student, Ferne Edwards, was appointed as Research Associate to provide the team with background materials, and these were presented to the field studies students once they began in the field. The 2011 reference (Edwards et al., 2011) represents the final version of this work.

(Mason and Docking, 2005; Mason and Knowd, 2010). Importantly, he detailed major changes in land use post-World War II, which were attributed to the planning profession's view that the agricultural lands were 'awaiting higher economic development' (namely, residential and commercial developments).

At the conclusion of the *ArtForum*, 42 artists entered their contact details to an expression-of-interest list. Planning for the 2010 Field Study began in earnest.

The Field Study Programme

The pedagogic attributes of Field Study programmes have developed as field procedures and have been progressively researched. The programme had its origins with backpacking trips into remote locations in south-east New South Wales in the early 1980s, which demonstrated the pedagogic value of instigating creative art production in locations that afforded inspirational, high-quality sensory experiences. This provided a much-needed option to the prevailing curricula focus on highly culturally processed material as starting points for creative expression, such as artwork in galleries, visual and literary references found in libraries and on the emerging Internet. Student feedback regarding this alternative was extremely positive.²

By the mid-1990s, the programme was more comprehensive and embraced rural and suburban field locations with their resident populations. An emphasis on community consultation emerged and opened up the prospect of long-term, genuine engagement. Expert informants such as local scientists, Indigenous leaders, landholders, shire officials, community activists and local artists interpreted pertinent, observable subject matter as creative stimuli for participating artists. By way of reciprocation to this community generosity, exhibitions of artwork generated by Field Study programmes (more than 30 of them) have been held in the field locations that inspired them. Communities invariably responded with great enthusiasm, pointing out how much they appreciated viewing, in their regional centres, meaningful, aesthetic visual imagery about where they lived and worked. The art exhibitions also renewed their appreciation of the lifestyle values to which they subscribed and often forgot under the stresses of everyday life. Inspiration to act on pressing environmental issues transferred from artist to community. Collaborations with public and private environmental agencies flourished.

² Later, as the programme continued to consolidate, the October 2003 ANU CEDAM Student Evaluation for the Enhancement of Teaching at the School of Art revealed that 35 students from the 254 respondents had undertaken Field Study programmes. On a rating scale from 1 to 5, the minimum score was 3, maximum was 5, mean was 4.7 and standard deviation was 0.79.

Following on from teaching awards (ANU 1998–99) and national pedagogic citations (Reid, 2006) for innovative practice, the Field Study programme, and the environmental issues it was addressing in the Murray–Darling Basin from 2003 to 2007, became the focus of an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage project called ‘Engaging Visions’ (2007–10), with the Murray–Darling Basin Commission (now Authority) as industry partner. The outcome was a refined field procedure based on scholarly evidence gathered from participating artists and the communities with whom they consulted (Reid et al., 2010). The Contested Landscapes of Western Sydney Field Study was the first beneficiary of this effort.

The Contested Landscapes of Western Sydney Field Study

The first of three five-day field trips to the north-western part of the Sydney Basin commenced on Wednesday, 3 March 2010, with 18 participating artists. Keynote briefings were delivered at various field locations by community activists, landholders, council officials and academics, including Tony Capon and Jane Dixon. The desirability of involving student artists who lived in Sydney and working with them as partners in the Field Study was acknowledged from the very beginning. The Sydney Gallery School (SGS), Meadowbank College of Technical and Further Education, which had undertaken a very successful Field Study jointly with the ANU School of Art a few years earlier, was an obvious choice. The Sydney-based artists scheduled their own fieldwork, but both artist groups came together for a series of exhibitions that extended into 2013.

Exhibition venues included galleries in Sydney and Canberra. The Canberra exhibition coincided with the 2010 Australian Academy of Science Fenner Conference, ‘Healthy Climate, Planet and People. Co-Benefits for Health from Action on Climate Change’. The exhibition in Sydney was at the See Street Gallery, Meadowbank College, TAFE NSW. The exhibitions in Western Sydney — at the Purple Noon Art Gallery, Freemans Reach; and The Sassafras Creek Gallery, Kurrajong Village — resonated with the communities in which they were mounted by delivering aesthetic visual statements about issues of local significance. The research knowledge that Tony Capon and Jane Dixon (and the scientific team that came with them) shared with artists in the field made a major contribution to the conceptual foundations and pertinence of the work that the artists produced. The benefits that the scientist delivered to the artist were very apparent.

Extensions to the Field Study

An exhibition of selected works from the Contested Landscapes of Western Sydney Field Study was mounted in the NCEPH corridors leading to the very lecture theatre in which the NCEPH Lunchtime Seminar, referred to at the beginning of the chapter, would take place – another thread, although this one continued to spin. Just over a year later, in November 2012, a compilation of Western Sydney contested landscape artwork was mounted at the Shine Dome, Canberra, ACT, for Tony McMichael's Festschrift, *From Healthy Workers to a Healthy Planet*. Supplemented by a major body of new artwork, produced from a second Field Study in Western Sydney in the second half of 2012, the repository of visual imagery about Western Sydney's contested landscapes enabled another substantial exhibition, 'Biting the Carpet. Food Security and the Lay of the Land', ANU School of Art Foyer Gallery, curated and mounted for the XIX International Conference of the Society for Human Ecology held at ANU in February 2013.

Scientist–Artist Partnerships

None of the Field Study programmes delivered in the period prior to the 2010 Field Study had been informed by a current scientific research project; and certainly none of the scientists participating in previous Field Study programmes, who had briefed artists in the field, had reflected openly on the interaction itself and how it might deliver benefits for *their* research. At least, no one had done it quite like Jane Dixon did; and here we acknowledge anthropologist Bronwyn Isaacs who along with Jane conducted and analysed interviews with all of the ANU Field Study participants as they were putting the final touches to their works. The interviews were semi-structured and aimed to elicit artist motivations for involvement in the Field Study, their understanding of what they observed, and how they incorporated this understanding in their art work.

In her contribution to the NCEPH Lunchtime Seminar, Dixon began to thread her thoughts about her involvement in the 2010 Field Study into a tentative hypothesis about artist–scientist partnerships. Dixon had prior experience with Australia Council and local government funded community artists and their role in community building. She was aware that community arts had become a vibrant aspect to mental health and health promotion programmes (see www.artsandhealth.org.au). However, the Field Study did not fit that mould.

Unlike community art, where the focus is on excellence in process, a Field Study is founded on fine art, which aspires to excellence in output. Trained to perceive and conceptualise meaningful relationships by looking, the visual fine artists involved in the 2010 Field Study responded by formulating aesthetic visual propositions. Consequently, the Field Study did not equate to being a science communication exercise either. Unlike science communication, where the focus is on comprehension, works of fine art, informed by science, invoke a more comprehensive human experience by synthesising reliable knowledge and personal opinion with aesthetic appeal intended to instigate emotional investment. Immersion in a Field Study, with its fine art objectives, stimulates the intellect, which leads inevitably to critical reflection of the overall research agenda – scientific or otherwise. All works of fine art are aesthetic evaluations (Reid, 2011).

Jane Dixon articulated her experience as follows:

‘Public health researchers have a strong commitment to bridging the research–policy divide so that the rhetoric of evidence-based policy is reflected in practical actions. At NCEPH, the attempt to forge links with policymakers takes multiple forms:

1. Industry partnership grants: ARC Linkage grants and NH&MRC Partnership grants, CSIRO Flagship grants, CRC involvements.
2. Sitting on high-level advisory committees and briefing government committees.
3. Undertaking consultancies for government.
4. Writing for ‘applied’ journals, e.g. *New South Wales Public Health Bulletin*, read by more than 14,000 people on a regular basis.
5. Making submissions to parliamentary enquiries.
6. Writing op eds for newspapers.
7. Posting policy briefs on websites.

A less direct way to inform policy, but one that has a proud track record in public health, is to work with civil society or communities on issues of concern to them. What might be termed ‘grass roots engagement’ is undertaken in the hope that better-briefed citizens will demand more of their politicians, and that bottom-up pressure will advance policy options. Empowered health citizens can also teach health scientists about their experience of their environments and why they believe that they are in poor health. The public’s understanding of

the causes of ill health (referred to as ‘lay epidemiology’) can be a powerful influence on everyday behaviours (as has happened with smoking cessation, AIDS prevention, SIDS prevention; see Banwell et al., 2013).

It is this philosophy regarding the important role of civil society in policy change and behavioural change that encouraged my participation in The Contested Landscape project. Initially, I believed that the artists could help the scientists better communicate the science regarding the relationship between sprawling urban housing development and diminishing urban agricultural production. However, my year-long involvement broadened my assumptions about what a partnership between scientists and artists could achieve. In particular, I now regard artists as lay scientists, and as a result, they make an invaluable contribution to the scientific endeavour.

First, the artists involved in this project sharpened our fundamental hypothesis. We began by arguing that urban housing development was consuming food-producing lands. However, owing to their educated eye and evaluative approach, the artists brought an observational acuity to their own deliberations. They noted, for example, the proliferation of non-residential uses that were overtaking the landscape: equestrian-related enterprises, turf farms and flower farms, plus areas dedicated to water sports and to other sports. They challenged us to broaden the hypothesis about the nature of land-use changes and the nature of the inequitable changes from land that was once affordable for small farms to lands with higher-value uses.

Renowned Australian anthropologist, Gillian Cowlishaw, who has also worked in the Sydney area, defined ethnography, a fundamental research approach adopted in anthropology, in the terms that reflected my observations of the way the artists went about their work. She says, ‘Ethnographers provide evidence of amazing variation in the social worlds human beings have created, encompassing dramatic differences in everyday habits, material creations, systems of knowledge and belief’ (Cowlishaw, 2009, p. x11). They do this by going ‘among people’ and relating ‘to them as far as possible on their own terms’ (Cowlishaw, 2009, pp. 6–7). In this project, the artists went into the natural and built environment and tried to relate to that in its own terms, yielding enormous variation in perspective but some common threads, as I describe below.

Second, they did not shy away from judging the aesthetic qualities of what they observed – ugliness, impoverished landscapes because of monocultural activity – including housing estates. For many social scientists, the very notion of aesthetics is to be avoided because of its highly subjective nature. It is hard to measure and to assess. I was confronted by my own adoption of cultural relativism which denied any group the right to claim a more authentic, correct

or judgemental position. While this could be an egalitarian position to adopt, it was also akin to fence sitting, thereby making it difficult to recommend directions for change, which was an important aim of the CSIRO research.

However, when you have a nearly unanimous position being advanced on matters of environmental qualities by a group of 40 artists, the argument becomes more compelling. Thus, in assessing land-use changes, the scientists could add the more ephemeral aesthetic consequences to the existing list of economic, social and environmental consequences gathered in the background research.

For example, Marzena Wasikowska's photographs of massive investment in suburban housing on reclaimed agricultural land visually and compellingly complement the evidence that it is almost impossible to regain land, lost to urban development, for food growing purposes. Jo Donnelly's mixed media work addresses the western Sydney 'contest' as cultural heritage in a sweeping landscape where the opposing forces of food producers and urban housing developers strategically manoeuvre like armed forces on age-old tapestries. Judith Ringger renders a desolate future. Aria Stone, in dialogue with both Donnelly and Ringger, paints a solitary, spaced-out cow standing on a desolate patch of ground bulldozed for cul-de-sacs and turf. Sue Downes in her screen-printed, precautionary principle tee shirts graphically advocates a 'cool' solution to restraining urban growth and expected urban overheating by drafting zones for food production just as we allocate national parks to preserve biodiversity. An A.G. Stokes canvas of freshly picked veggies descending from the sky on inner Sydney could have sold ten times over in cultural support of city dwellers fertilising asphalt footpaths with the seeds of edible plants. John Reid's photograph documents a threatened landscape extending from an orchard near Kurrajong Village to the Grose Valley that painter Leo Robba also renders in accord with a future scenario. And, in one masterly work in acrylic on canvas, titled *Branching Out*, Kerry Shepherdson articulates the complexity of the Field Study theme. (See reproductions of these artworks at the end of the chapter and on the front cover).

Third, the individual and collected works can become props for action research. This is a form of research that places a premium on inspiring reflection about social phenomena, which in turn may lead to actions to change circumstances (Wadsworth, 2011). As participating student Leo Robba remarked on his involvement in the project:

As a landscape painter, the way I would usually work would be to move through the landscape and choose scenes that would carry their own message. Looking for a landscape that conveys a message that is often ambiguous but one that can be heightened by the way I choose to frame

what I see. The 'human' content embedded in the view. My hope is that the viewer can share the artist's experience and if very successfully can actually sense time, place and meaning.

With the work for Contested Landscape I found it quite difficult to work in my usual way. One panel was painted en plein air and the other (night scene) in the studio. This more conceptual approach is not so familiar to me but I felt the need for a more overt political statement.

The man who inspired several of the powerful images was described by Leo in these terms:

John Maguire [an orchardist who briefed the artists] was inspiring and the view from the balcony of his coffee shop/produce shed grew in importance the more I heard his story: the family history and his passion for the farming culture and the culture that his land represents. On listening to John it felt like he had decided it was up to him to make what could be the last stand.

The travelling exhibition, along with the catalogue, provided material to generate responses from residents in the Sydney Basin. One of our research associates, Ferne Edwards, has used the catalogue as a discussion starter with the Sydney Basin's amateur bee-keepers, and gives the catalogue as a present.

The catalogue is essentially a document that reminds readers that the landscape has been crafted by human activity and will continue to be so. The images can create alternative visions for the landscape and a desire by viewers to exert pressure on important decision makers. Indeed, we had instances where the artists themselves became active politically, as Fran Ifould recounts:

I'm also extremely concerned about the standard of the urban sprawl ... We went to Orin Park and we have written the [developers] a letter about our concern that there were no provisions for community gardens or anything like that ... The first display house that we walked into, we walked through a foyer into a kitchen, open plan, into a living room, architecturally designed with all these down-lights. That house had sixty ceiling down-lights in the foyer, the kitchen and the living room; I mean, it's not sustainable. Where are we going here?

Fourth, the artists are a repository of data. A majority of the artists had a prior or present connection to the area under study, which added an emotional and educated quality to their responses. We interviewed them all, and three themes emerged:

1. *Nostalgia and sense of loss at how the landscape was being transformed.*

Shirley Dunn expressed a sentiment common to the other participating artists:

I have been working in ceramics and ... for me the rectangular platters I have used symbolize the Hawkesbury-Nepean River valley. In the work, 'Only for Houses', the symbolic housing estates on small plates are like rafts drifting into the landscape of the river. In the second work, 'The Last Fruit', the valley is covered with small housing blocks that replace the apple orchards and the farms ...

I found the field trips very inspirational, I had not visited this area for a number of years and to see first-hand the changes was important to me. The river and its surrounds are very beautiful but are being destroyed with the increase of housing estates.

My mother retired to live at McGraths Hill and I often took her for drives around the area until her death in 1995. She knew her family had once lived and farmed in the area. Her father was born at Castlereagh Road near Penrith. His father and grandfather built the old slab cottage called 'Puddledock', and I suspect he was born there in 1864. My mother's family have researched our background and I am descended from the Herberts, the Purcells, the Howells, the Kennedys, the Burns and the Marshes, all neighbours who had small farms along the river from as early as 1803.

While it is easy for me to be sentimental about my ancestors, their farms would have destroyed the rich natural environment that once supported the Aboriginal population along the river. I have very negative feelings about the gravel mining companies at Penrith. I am unimpressed with what ... they have taken to support building developments in wider Sydney.

2. *Concern for loss of control over the food system.*

Miriam Cullen's account of her work *Fruitless* similarly resonated with what we heard from a majority of participating student artists:

It's a sculpture of two fruit branches, with some of the fruit transformed into suburban streets – they are covered with the maps of Sydney suburbs. It communicates a blight or affliction across the landscape, in the same way the suburbs are a blight across Western Sydney. The piece also suggests that attempts to halt the spread are 'fruitless'. The farm land has been lost under concrete and McMansions. I was inspired by a re-release of the first 'Gregory's' Sydney's maps from

1934. It illustrates a very different Sydney, a Sydney not mapped further west than Blacktown. The maps themselves have spread and over-ridden the landscape. The contrast to today illustrates how the sprawl is intractable, unstoppable.

3. *The emergence of an ugly aesthetic.*

Rosina Wainwright echoed the views of many when she said:

I recently read that Western Sydney had the ‘biggest houses in the world’, so I went and visited the new housing developments. We can’t afford it, it’s appalling; it’s taking no account of climate change. I photographed the ‘biggest houses in the world’ and used it in my work – cardboard fruit boxes with rows of houses – all squashed in. I work with assemblage, which is like poetry and metaphor. My father was a builder and valuer – from the age of about eight years old he taught me to look at houses. In the developments we saw in Sydney, I was struck by the facades – no detailing, they are like warehouses. They display very little wood. I think people are being manipulated, they have all that open plan which is very hard to heat. It’s driven by the market.

In conclusion, I have experienced first-hand the process of science-into-art and also art-into-science. Cowlshaw’s definition of ethnography encompasses a researcher’s insistence on experiencing particular social conditions and specific social relationships. This type of practice, she says, ‘is a close up experience of people who are likely to change your mind’ (Cowlshaw, 2009, p. xvi). This is how the artists have made their mark on the project: they have not only produced powerfully provocative artworks, through close encounters with local people in their natural and built environments they have opened the minds of the scientists to a more nuanced, and yet in some ways more disturbing, contestation beyond land zoning to who gets to decide how the dynamics between nature and society and between the past and the future will play out.’³

The Legacy

Since the 2013 contribution to the XIX International Conference of the Society for Human Ecology, the Field Study programme has moved its attention to the far south coast of New South Wales, where it collaborated with the National

³ The research assistant, Ferne Edwards, went on to recast her PhD topic to reflect multiple land-use contestations and food security. Edwards and Dixon embarked on research, which is ongoing, regarding bee-keeping in the suburbs: a marked point of contestation; and Dixon and Capon took their new understanding into the article led by Proust (2012).

Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF)-funded South-East Coast Adaptation (SECA) Research Project. The SECA Project, led by Professor Barbara Norman, University of Canberra (UC), with researchers from the University of Wollongong, UC and ANU, investigated the profile of climate-adapted coastal settlements in 2030. In November 2013, as part of the SECA Research Project's communication strategy, the SECA Field Study programme mounted an exhibition of visual art titled, 'Now & When' in Eden, New South Wales. About 300 people and 120 schoolchildren viewed the show. The Planning Institute of Australia has recently acknowledged this initiative in its 2014 National Awards in the category of Cutting Edge Research and Teaching.

The momentum continues with research projects currently being drafted to address climate change with Griffith University's College of Art and the Griffith Climate Change Response Program; and healthy and sustainable cities in partnership with Tony Capon. Both projects incorporate the communicative talents of creative artists building on Tony McMichael's legacy and Jane Dixon's reflective thinking. It is the intension of these projects to investigate the efficacy of integrating Field Study-inspired fine artwork into social science methodologies as data in its own right; and as intellectual and emotional stimulus for quality data collection from communities via subsequent focus groups, interview, and survey.

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Figure 3.1 A.G. Stokes, *Veggies in the sky*, 2010, 111.2 cm x 82.0 cm, oil on canvas.

Dislodged from their shrinking traditional home in outer Western Sydney, the vegetables fly over the inner suburbs where there is a burgeoning mood for growing things.

Source: *The Contested Landscapes of Western Sydney Field Study catalogue*. Edition 1. 2010.



Figure 3.2 John Reid, *View to Grose Valley from Enniskillen Orchard Stall*, 2010, 40.0 cm x 90.0 cm, digital print on rag paper.

This panorama documents contested land in Western Sydney. Current landholders, many of whom are food producers, are under tremendous stress from a political climate that favours re-zoning for intensive residential development. The landscape in this photograph is depicted in the scenario painting by Leo Robba.

Source: The Contested Landscapes of Western Sydney Field Study catalogue. Edition 1. 2010.



Figure 3.3 Marzena Wasikowska, *Western Sydney Landscape Contestants 1–4 (detail: 1 Intensive Real Estate)*, 2010, 65.0 cm x 95.0 cm x 4, digital photographs on rag paper.

This image is one of a series of photographs documenting types of residential land in Western Sydney. Other images include life-style blocks, quarter-acre blocks and orchards.

Source: The Contested Landscapes of Western Sydney Field Study catalogue. Edition 1. 2010.



Figure 3.4 Leo Robba, *Contested Landscapes: Split Views (detail)*, 2010, 128.0 cm x 80.0 cm in two panels, acrylic on canvas.

The landscape in this panel is the view to Grose Valley from Enniskillen Orchard (as documented in John Reid's panoramic photograph), rendered as sprawling suburbia.

Source: The Contested Landscapes of Western Sydney Field Study catalogue. Edition 1. 2010.



Figure 3.5 Jo Donnelly, *Populate and Perish!*, 2010, 58.0 cm x 41.5 cm, mixed media on paper.

Urban sprawl is an ever-increasing problem as our cities try to accommodate our growing population. Planning and protecting the fertile land of Sydney's food basin seems fundamental to a sustainable future.

Source: The Contested Landscapes of Western Sydney Field Study catalogue. Edition 1. 2010.



Figure 3.6 Judith Ringger, ‘cheque’ burial, 2010, 22.6 cm x 37.4 cm, etching with monoprint.

Don't be the clown, don't allow for folly and foolishness. Act against the greedy developer, the ringmaster who calls the shots. In the spotlight is the dwindling arable food producing land in the Sydney Basin, so the apathetic shouldn't grizzle, 'what can you do, it will be done anyway!' Instead create a huge embarrassing political spectacle. Yell louder than the ringmaster, show up his conniving ways and point fingers at his chums who gloat over the spoils in the wings. Don't lie down in the rich soil and allow little houses to be built all over you, wearing a 'cheque' burial shawl, dead in your own paddock of apathy and malaise.

Source: The Contested Landscapes of Western Sydney Field Study catalogue. Edition 1. 2010.



Figure 3.7 Aria Stone, *Going ... Going ... Gone*, 2010, 80.0 cm x 120.0 cm, acrylic, oil and wax medium on canvas.

This painting speaks about our precious history of small farming in the fertile basin of Sydney's Western outer suburbs. It is all too common to realise the value of things once they are gone. Let's prevent the loss of this precious food recourse to housing development.

Source: The Contested Landscapes of Western Sydney Field Study catalogue. Edition 1. 2010.



Figure 3.8 Sue Downes, *Keep it cool*, 2010, 22.7 cm x 19.4 cm, silkscreen print, tee shirt.

Growing food in Western Sydney will help to keep Sydney cool by having green areas and by reducing the need for transport. The National preservation of food growing areas, similar to National Parks, would have its benefits: a lower limit for the subdivision of land, e.g. a minimum of 10 acres and; local councils, who might have vested interests in development, would be stopped from rezoning fertile farm land.

Source: *The Contested Landscapes of Western Sydney Field Study catalogue*. Edition 1. 2010.

This text is taken from *Health of People, Places And Planet: Reflections based on Tony McMichael's four decades of contribution to epidemiological understanding*, edited by Colin D. Butler, Jane Dixon and Anthony G. Capon, published 2015 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.