

**Implementing a Relational Worldview:  
Watershed Torbay, Western Australia –  
Connecting Community and Place**

**Marie-Louise Duxbury - BA (Hons) 1982**

This thesis is presented for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy of Murdoch University

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.



.....

Marie Louise Duxbury

*“If we don’t change course,  
we may end up where we are heading”*

Chinese proverb

*“If you don’t know where you’re going,  
any path will take you there”*

Sioux proverb



## **Abstract**

The Australian landcare movement is considered to be a major success, with an extensive community landcare network developed, raised levels and depth of awareness, and a range of demonstration projects undertaken. It has inspired people across Australia and has been emulated overseas. However, negative trends in environmental conditions continue unabated. If the approach of the Australian landcare movement to date has not addressed the current unsustainable farming practices, what approach will?

This Australian study explores the history of the 'mechanistic' worldview, its influence on the attitudes to and treatment of landscapes and indigenous knowledge from colonisation, and the ongoing impacts on current social and natural rural landscapes. Increasing tension between the mechanistic worldview and the growing landcare ethic based on relationships is apparent.

Through the focus project, Watershed Torbay, a different way of seeing and treating the world is explored by praxis. A worldview based on relationships and connection as the end purpose is proffered. Strengthening connection with one's own moral framework, and relationships with people and place in community, are seen as the path to achieving sustainability based on ecological and values rationality.

It is recognised that there are multiple ways of seeing and experiencing the world, and it is important to give voice to all players with a connection to decision-making. This also means that there are different forms of knowledge; these can be grouped under the typology of epistemic or scientific knowledge, techne or technical/practical capability, and the central form of knowledge about values and interests.

I have worked with the focus project as a reflective practitioner undertaking action research; this is evident in the movement between theory and practice through the thesis. The thesis concludes in praxis taking the learning from the focus project, and exploration of theory, to answer the question posed at the outset by outlining how the relational worldview can be applied to the regional bodies now delivering major landcare programs.

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