

Resilient future rangelands – integrating environment and livelihoods

This year, once again, socio-economic and environmental extremes have posed a significant threat to global rangelands, from tragic desert locust outbreaks across East Africa, Asia and the Middle East, devastating drought, flooding, and fires in Australia, to a global pandemic that greatly disrupted trades and access to resources.

Despite these challenges, once again, rangeland social-ecological systems have demonstrated substantial potential for resilience, from adapting farm management practices, to diversifying sources of incomes through carbon farming, to revealing depths of solidarity amongst local communities during challenging times.

Local and global pressures on rangelands are likely to increase under climate change and other future global trends. As such, it is crucial, now more than ever, to share experiences about handling variability and uncertainty. The suite of adaptation strategies that has been developed in response to existing variability may also not be enough, and more transformational adaptation options and resilience pathways need exploring.

In September 2019, the Australian Rangeland Society held its 20th biennial conference in Canberra-Australia on the theme ‘Resilient future rangelands – integrating environment and livelihoods.’ This conference provided the momentum and ground for this Special Issue. The articles are derived from keynote addresses, presentations, a ‘world café’ session and a survey of the conference participants. In addition to the common format of scientific reports and review articles, contributions to

this Special Issue include more opinion-oriented or agenda-setting short perspective and commentary pieces, to better capture the outcomes of the conference.

This Special Issue focusses on the diversity of approaches required to increase rangelands resilience. Bringing together Australian Aboriginal, scientific and local knowledge, strengthening human capacity in rangelands, and proposing new industries are only some of the valuable ideas proposed in the articles.

As with previous editions, the conference presented a great opportunity for a younger generation of scientists, rangeland managers and other stakeholders to learn from people involved in the rangelands in the past few decades. It was also a valuable opportunity for us to share our own experiences and ideas. Only this precious exchange of knowledge can pave the way for continuing the quest towards resilient and viable rangelands.

We are very grateful for the authors’ excellent contributions, and wish you an enjoyable and insightful read.

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