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Thesis Topic

How does farming as an occupational identity ‘fit’ within the overall personal identity of rural landholders and is it possible to classify those landholders using a collective identity construct?

Summary

In Australia and the United States many rural areas are no longer dominated by agricultural uses, but are shaped by a mix of production, consumption and conservation values. An important driver of this trend to multifunctional landscapes is the influx of non-farmers to rural areas. An identity is complex and unique to each individual who holds an identity. Recent advances in the theory of collective identity provide the opportunity to explore the nature and role of farming identity from a much stronger theoretical foundation than previous research, including recent Australian studies attempting to develop typologies of rural landholders. The seven elements of the collective identity construct appear to provide much of that “missing link”. A mixed methods approach will be used to understand the role and outcomes of farming identity in an international context (i.e. Australia and the United States). The goal is to learn how a farmer identity fits in to the overall personal identity of rural landholders in multifunctional rural landscapes.