

Fire in the human ecosystem - a question map

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Abstract

The human ecosystem consists of human beings and their interactions with their environment. The human environment is a seamless garment, but for conceptual

purposes can be split into two parts. 'Society' is the part of our environment, created by us, which would vanish with us were we to disappear in a puff of smoke. 'Nature' is the part of our environment which would remain. Human artefacts lie somewhere in between, since they would outlast us for a while, but eventually succumb to entropy due to a lack of maintenance. Our survival and wellbeing depend upon our activities within both parts of our environment, so that CALM policy must take both into consideration, seeking harmony between human systems and natural systems. As a human activity, prescribed burning is linked to many phenomena, both natural and social. Question-maps are a way of starting to think in a structural way about our activities, our wellbeing, society and nature, and a question-map about fire in our forest systems leads us into conceptual model building, or Systems Ecology, using ideas from General Systems Theory, Graph Theory, Matrix Theory, and Human Ecology. The resulting models are useful for policy formulation, management training, public education and research project management.