**University of the Aegean Summer School**

**Transitions in Landscape and Land Use - PhD Workshop, 12-18 June 2013, Lesvos Island**

**Overall Comments and Feedback for Participants from Maggie Roe**

I enjoyed the sessions I took part in and found the students’ work interesting. We had stimulating discussions and the students presented some good work. I have provided individual feedback on each student paper and presentation, but I would also like to provide some overall points that relate generally to the students’ work.

**Presentations:**

These were generally good. Key points to consider are:

* Speak to your audience. Do not speak to the screen or to your notes. Remember the focus should be on you and what you are saying. Capture the attention of the audience, look the audience in the eye!
* 1 Powerpoint slide = approximately 1 minute of your time. So if you have been given 15 minutes to present in, consider approximately 12 slides maximum. If you wish to leave time for discussion you need fewer slides.
* Do not read from the screen therefore do not print all your text on the slides. Use Powerpoint slides to summarise your points. The slides should be an *aide memoire* to you or to illustrate visually the points you are making with photos/images, charts, figures, tables etc. Use bullet points on slides sparingly. Remember we can read the slides more quickly than you can read the text to us. Use crib sheets or cards if necessary. Reading your presentation is ok, particularly if you are speaking in a non-native language, but don’t read from the slides! Read your prepared and rehearsed text slowly and carefully. Many people read far too quickly – often when speaking in a non-native language - and it is impossible for the audience to follow what is being said.
* The presentations generally indicated that more reading and supporting references were needed for the research. Be careful of making statements that are unsupported. Even on Powerpoint you many need to insert key supporting references.
* In some cases the presentation was much more concise and punchy than the paper and provided the information basis required. A good way to help structure your paper is to think about it telling a story and to do it on Powerpoint first.

**General Comments on Papers and Research:**

* How have you mapped or scoped the literature?
* Much wider reading is needed generally.
* Look at other papers on similar topics and see how other researchers cite evidence.
* You need to articulate the research questions much more clearly. Most of you did not set these out clearly at all.
* Most papers needed to respond more coherently to a particular focus. Much of the information in the papers was useful and good, but unfocused. Consider why the issue is interesting/important. What possible theoretical framework and/or conceptual basis could respond to the gap(s) in the literature?
* A paper is not a PhD thesis – do not try and present your whole research in one paper.
* Be careful of normative statements; generally you need to be much more critical. The literature review in particular should be a *critical literature review.* Get into the habit of challenging existing views; think outside your box! Read views from other disciplines.
* Have you a theoretical framework for your work? What theory is relevant to your research? A number of papers were weak on theoretical frameworks.
* Generally a lack of asking ‘why’ questions. There seem to be lots of ‘what?’, ‘how useful?’ and ‘how many?’, but are these really relevant or interesting?
* The analysis methods were often not, or poorly, stated.
* Consider whether you are writing a methods paper, a theoretical paper or a paper based on discussion of findings.
* Avoid assumptions of cause and effect. In the papers there were many areas where evidence was missing.
* Write in a more analytical and objective way when reviewing the literature. Do not impart your own values or value judgements generally in this kind of work.
* Write in a more analytical style throughout your paper! Create an argument throughout your paper that answers your research questions.
* Avoid polemic or political statements! All statements need to be supported by good referencing. Always support statements relating to research evidence and assumptions with references.
* Introductions can be short. The main section should be the discussion section – in whatever form.
* Papers show some mixing of methods information into other sections. Your methodology sections should be clear, concise and relevant. Avoid long descriptions and justifications of methods – readers will probably have heard much of this before. In the humanities methods sections are sometimes left out altogether and short methods sections incorporated into other sections.
* The abstract should establish the interest in the subject/problem/questions as well as outline the findings. Many people forget to put the findings into abstracts.
* Be clear about what new knowledge you are providing, and concentrate on it.
* Look carefully at the style requirements of the journal you are intending to submit to. Do not go over the stipulated word limit, put the references/endnotes in the correct format and look at the general structure for headings of sections in papers published.

MHR/July 2013