

I am a Geographer...

Jen Bond

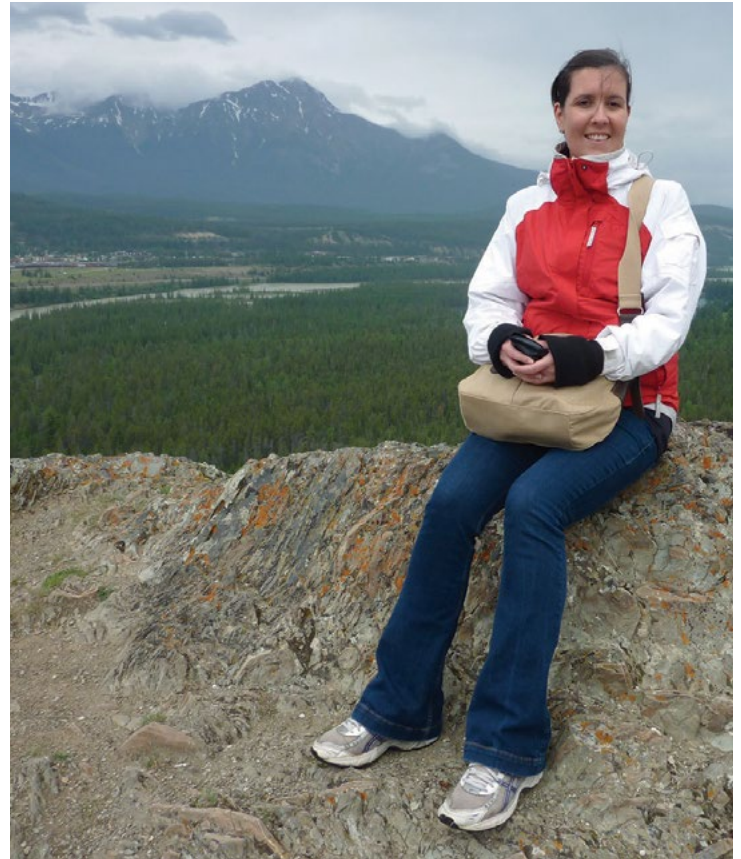
Lecturer in Human Geography

My first degree was a Bachelor of Agricultural Science (Hons) from the University of Melbourne. In 2004, I joined the (then) Victorian Department of Primary Industries' (DPI) Graduate Program and moved around the state, working in the Grains Extension team. I was working with farmers in relation to their grain crops, however I felt more interested in the farmers themselves and their networks and decision-making than I was in fertiliser. While working for DPI, I undertook a Graduate Certificate in Rural Systems Management from the University of Queensland, doing coursework in adult learning, facilitation and rural community development. This was my first real look into the social sciences – and I loved it!

After the graduate program I took six months' leave and volunteered at a rural university in Cambodia. I had a wonderful experience and knew that I was interested in food security and development studies. In 2007, I moved to Denmark to start my Master of Science in Agricultural Development. This was an interdisciplinary degree that integrated agriculture and development studies, rather than studying them separately. I undertook my thesis fieldwork in India, investigating farmers' behaviour in relation to pesticide use. I realised that this sort of fieldwork brought all my interests together: research, agriculture and rural people. I decided to continue with a PhD, also at the University of Copenhagen, but focused on natural resource conflict, undertaking fieldwork in Kenya. It was through the PhD that I really cemented my interest in understanding how people interact with, and make sense of, their natural environment and each other.

Now I am a lecturer in Human Geography at Charles Sturt University, Albury-Wodonga campus. My teaching relates to natural resource management, environmental planning and social research methods. My research focuses on rural people and natural resource management, usually in agricultural landscapes.

After completing my studies, I had two separate visits to Hue University of Agriculture & Forestry in Vietnam, totalling 14 months. I continue to work with my colleague, Associate Professor Le Thi Hoa Sen, on farmers' climate adaptation in central Vietnam. We first looked at how farmers were adapting their rice farming systems due to early flooding and how this contested government rice production policies. We also focused on how gender played a role in



this improved system and how the adaptation impacted the household in terms of reduced labour requirements for women and male migration to urban centres for off-farm employment. Our more recent work has focused on ethnic minority farmers in the upland areas of central Vietnam and how their social networks and information channels influence their adaptation decision-making.

My work draws heavily on theory from Human Geography as it provides a frame through which I consider how people interact with their natural environment, including how they connect with it over time and how economic activities are distributed through a landscape. I work with other geographers, sociologists, political scientists, ecologists, lawyers, farmers and practitioners.

I have always been interested in rural places and people, and moving from agricultural science into the social sciences was a welcome shift for me as it really made sense to consider the wider context of people within these landscapes and productive systems, not separate from them. There is a great need for geographers who value different forms of knowledge (physical, biological, social, local, Indigenous etc.) to contribute to the management of landscapes and the broader environment into the future.