

Regenerative Place

PRACTICES. CULTURES. SYSTEMS

We acknowledge the peoples of Yuin Country on the South Coast of NSW as the traditional knowledge holders and custodians of the lands, waters, air and sky where this project takes place. We acknowledge that sovereignty of these lands was never ceded, and that we are guests on this Country. We pay our respects to the Elders past, present and emerging.

Case Study Update Dec 2023 – Cultural burning in Yuin Country

Purpose This is an update for the research participants and stakeholders in the ongoing research project being undertaken within Yuin Country by Dr Isabel Sebastian of the School of Geography and Planning, Cardiff University in collaboration with Aboriginal mentors and research collaborators in Yuin Country.

Project title Cultural fire practices in Yuin Country – diverse perspectives on barriers and enablers within current land governance and decision making (this is one of three case studies as part of the Regenerative Place project)

Progress so far

Approach: For this research project we are taking a Country-centred approach. This means Country informs and guides the research process and how we make sense of what we are learning. As a cross-cultural study we value all knowledge types equally but are deliberately foregrounding Indigenous knowledge systems as an attempt to decolonising research on cultural fire in Yuin Country. The study includes three methods of knowledge creation, including an Indigenous guided methodology of looking, listening and seeing Country, interviews with Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders and a literature and governance review.



Look, listen, see and learn: A central component of the research methodology relates to learning to listen and read the signs and indicators of Country. Observations and learnings from Country are documented in research diaries and reflected on together with the Aboriginal mentors in an ongoing learning process.



Image: Mogo Cultural Fire Public Event, April 2023. Photo by I. Sebastian

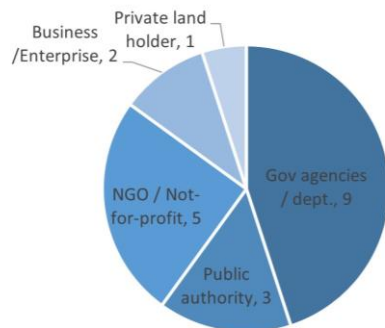
Research question: As a result of the methodology, the research question evolved over the course of the project with the guidance of the Aboriginal mentors, collaborators and interview participants. This was necessary to decolonise the approach.

Initial: *What are the barriers and enablers of cultural burning in Yuin Country and pathways for accommodating the practice in existing land governance, policy and planning systems?*

Current: *When we place Country at centre of decision-making about land and fire management, what are implications for governance, policy and knowledge systems?*

This shift foregrounds a respectful relationship with Country as a land governance approach that impacts current policy, structures and knowledge systems.

Interviews: The scope of the project allowed for a small sample of 20 interviews across Yuin Country, including an equal number with Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants. This is not intended to be a representative study of all the stakeholders in Yuin Country but as a starting point to provide opportunities for further dialogue. The interviews are now complete and analysis is underway. Interviews were held with the following organisation types:



Literature & governance review: A wide range of reports, literature and government policy and legislation is currently being reviewed. An analysis of the implications of how the governance systems on land rights, fire and land management create barriers and/or enablers for caring for Country and cultural fire practice is underway and will be included in the forthcoming Yuin Country Case Study Report.



Image: Fire permit season, November 2022 . Photo by I. Sebastian

Ethics approval: The research project was approved by Ethics Committees at the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and at Cardiff University, UK.

Data Sovereignty: All information shared by any of the participants in this study, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, remains the intellectual property of the participant.

Co-authorship: All participants will have the opportunity to be co-authors in the case study report and academic publications from this research.

Monitoring: This project is funded through an EU Horizon 2020 Postdoc research Fellowship awarded to Dr Isabel Sebastian under supervision of Cardiff University and is subject to the standard EU continual monitoring program.

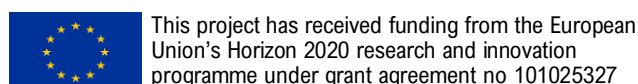


Image: Emu pair at Potato Point beach, October 2022. Photo by I. Sebastian

Work in progress & planned

Process from here: Initially a workshop was planned to be held in late 2023/early 2024. However, several of the interviewees and mentors suggested that a one-on-one follow up with each interview participant is preferred. This is to adapt to a number of challenges due to the distances involved in travel to a central location in Yuin Country, the time requirement and the cultural load experienced by the Indigenous participants. The purpose of the one-on-one follow up conversations is to report back on the interim findings and to discuss and refine the validity of the findings before publishing any results. This will take place in the first half of 2024.

Sharing outcomes: There are a number of outcomes planned from this case study:

- Case Study Report – for research participants and stakeholders
- Policy briefing note – for policy-makers
- Academic paper – for knowledge sharing with academic audiences
- Conference and public presentations – for stakeholders and academic knowledge exchange to continue the conversation

Project information

Research Fellow: Dr Isabel Sebastian, an Australian permanent resident since 1988 of European heritage. completed her PhD at the University of Technology Sydney in 2018. For this project Isabel is based both on the South Coast of NSW and in Cardiff, UK.

Aboriginal Mentors and Collaborators: The project is guided by two Yuin knowledge holders and a Wiradjuri research collaborator based in Yuin Country.

Supervisors: Prof Andrew Flynn, Emeritus Prof Terry Marsden, Dr. Abid Mehmood, School of Geography and Planning, Cardiff University

Timeline: The research Fellowship is funded until May 2025, with stakeholder engagement continuing beyond that time.

More information: There is more information available on the project website at www.regenerativeplace.earth

Contact details:

For any questions, feedback or suggestions please contact

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