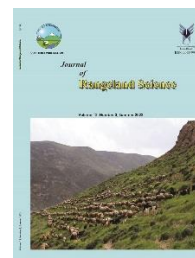


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Research and Full Length Article:

Recognising the value of Traditional Knowledge

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When I visited your beautiful country of Iran in 2018, one highlight for me was meeting two of your scholars who were both involved in CENESTA – the late Ghanimat Azhdari and her mentor, the late Taghi Farvar, Taghi had a remarkable & powerful presence. He influenced many around the world, including many of you who are here today. Ghanimat proudly described herself as the daughter of a pastoralist from southern Iran, something we shared as I too am the daughter of a pastoralist. They approached the world with a holistic lens, cognisant of the importance of socio-economic issues. They were both strong advocates for the collective rights of mobile Indigenous peoples. Their passion for Indigenous people's knowledge and wisdom inspired the theme I wish to highlight today.

The value of Indigenous or Traditional knowledge and Traditional Governance systems is starting to be recognised around the world. Today I will highlight a few projects in Australia, that indicate that how this is occurring in my country.

The widespread and catastrophic fires of 2019-2000 in Australia heightened our awareness of the value of the cultural burning practices of Aboriginal peoples. The 2019-2000 fires burnt over 77,000 square miles, which is about the area of Syria; 33 people died and approximately 1 billion animals. The need for different responses to fire was widely discussed.

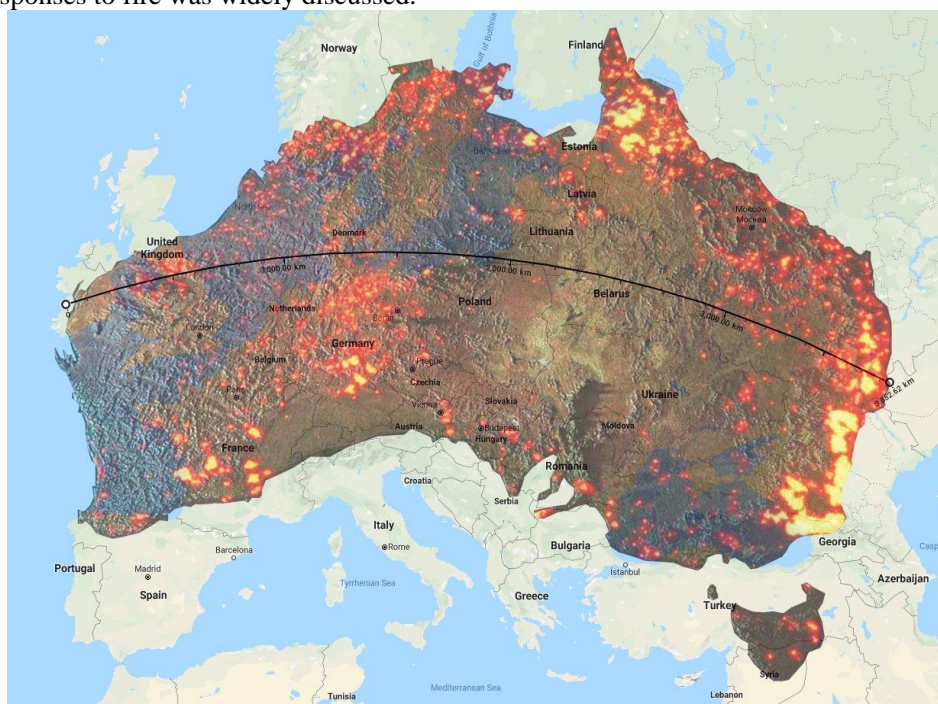


Fig. 1. Australia fire locations 2019-2000

In northern Australia, Indigenous Cultural Burning projects are benefitting from the Australian Government Emission Reduction Fund, which pays for carbon credits generated (Clean Energy Regulator 2021a). There are at least 78 projects which encourage soil carbon capture through cultural burning (Clean Energy Regulator 2021b). It is estimated that these projects will generate 9 million ACCU (Australian Carbon Credit Units), which is the equivalent of 9 million tonnes of carbon dioxide stored or avoided through the project (Clean Energy Regulator, 2021). These projects generate income for Indigenous groups as well as

achieving reducing emissions and producing conservation outcomes, a win-win.

Governance arrangements organised by Australian Aboriginal people are different to western systems, and tend to have more collective decision-making, and are more participatory. As well as appreciating traditional knowledge about land management, some people are recognising that we may also be able to learn from their governance systems. Governance systems are complex and not the same across the country. Australian Aboriginals are not a homogenous group, and the number of language groups across the country to indicate this variability and complexity.



Fig. 2. Australian Aboriginal language groups (Source: <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia>)

In the state of New South Wales, the University of Wollongong, an Indigenous way of embedding Indigenous knowledges and perspectives is being used to build a relationship with western European knowledge. This governance system is called “Jindaola” (Figure 3). This is a place-based system, which creates opportunities for formal and informal gatherings,

or yarning circles (represented as circles in Figure 5), where partners come together in two-way relationships. One important facet is the need to include the appropriate elders and knowledge holders. This governance system is based on the principles of respect, responsibility and reciprocity (Kennedy *et al.* 2018; Fildes *et al.* 2021).

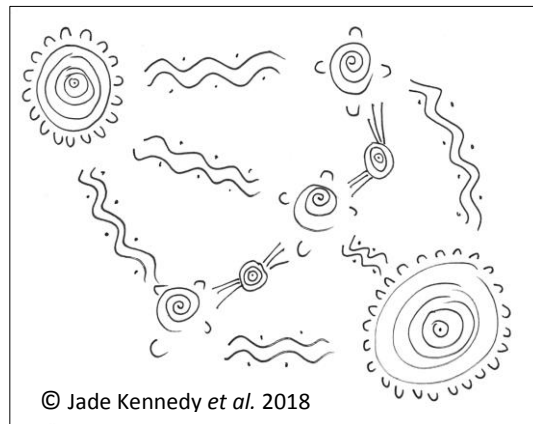


Fig. 3. Jindaola: one Aboriginal way of embedding knowledges

In Australian rangelands, white pastoralists are often forgotten in policy conversations, not only Australian Indigenous peoples. The Northern Australian Climate Program uses a co-innovation model to integrate western science and local pastoralist’s knowledge. This program operates across wide open plains of the north with beef cattle pastoralists

The primary method used are workshops run are by extension staff, all of whom are local people, many are pastoralists themselves. The aim is to improve climate models and practical forecasting tools and develop products to meet pastoralist’s needs. This model has proved to be very effective, as climate modelers from the Bureau of Meteorology have had the opportunity to visit pastoralists on their land, and see first-hand, exactly what the climate information is needed to improve beef production. Links between different knowledge’s is certainly being

recognised more and more in Australia and across the world.

One indication of the growing understanding of the value of social, economic and institutional matters, is that a Glossary of socio-economic and institutional terms is currently being developed for rangelands across the world. Definitions for about 50 such terms have been drafted, and panel of international reviewers are currently providing comments. It is hoped that the Glossary will be translated into several languages, and that this provides the opportunity to add more regionally specific terms. A draft will be presented as a poster at the International Grasslands and rangelands Congress, an all virtual meeting to be hosted by Kenyan in October 2021. Even the words rangeland and pastoralists are not commonly used around the world. A Google search of synonyms of the term “pastoralist” indicates that the words herder, cowboy and even nomad are more commonly used in everyday language (Figure 4).

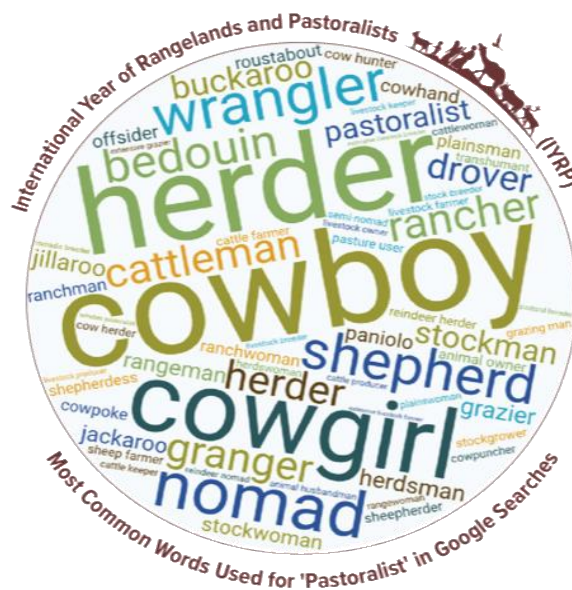


Fig. 4. Pastoralists and similar terms: a Word Cloud indication frequency of use (International Year of Rangeland and Pastoralists 2021)

While social, economic and institutional issues of rangelands are beginning to be recognised in some parts of the world, rangelands and pastoralists are often not a major consideration in government policy around the world. The proposed International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) is an opportunity to promote messages about the importance of pastoralists. Of course, many but not all, pastoralists around the world are mobile, but many practice some type of mobile livestock management.

The decision by the United Nations about whether or not the proposal for an IYRP will occur happens later in 2021. I call on everyone present today to use your networks to promote the IYRP to various government departments and organisations in your countries – not only the Departments of Agriculture, also Departments for the Environment, forests and range management, and Departments of Foreign Affairs. Many of you may have contacts within pastoralist's organisations, scientific and research organisations – all of these organisations can write and support the IYRP. All of these organisations & departments can encourage their national government to support the IYRP proposal at the United Nations General Assembly later in 2021.

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