

**INDIGENOUS LAND AND
SEA MANAGEMENT AND
SUSTAINABILITY IN NORTH
AUSTRALIA**

Sustainability in north Australia is intimately connected with the future of Indigenous peoples and their lands. However, the current context on Indigenous lands more frequently features political marginalisation, welfare economies and poor health and well-being, which detract from sustainability.

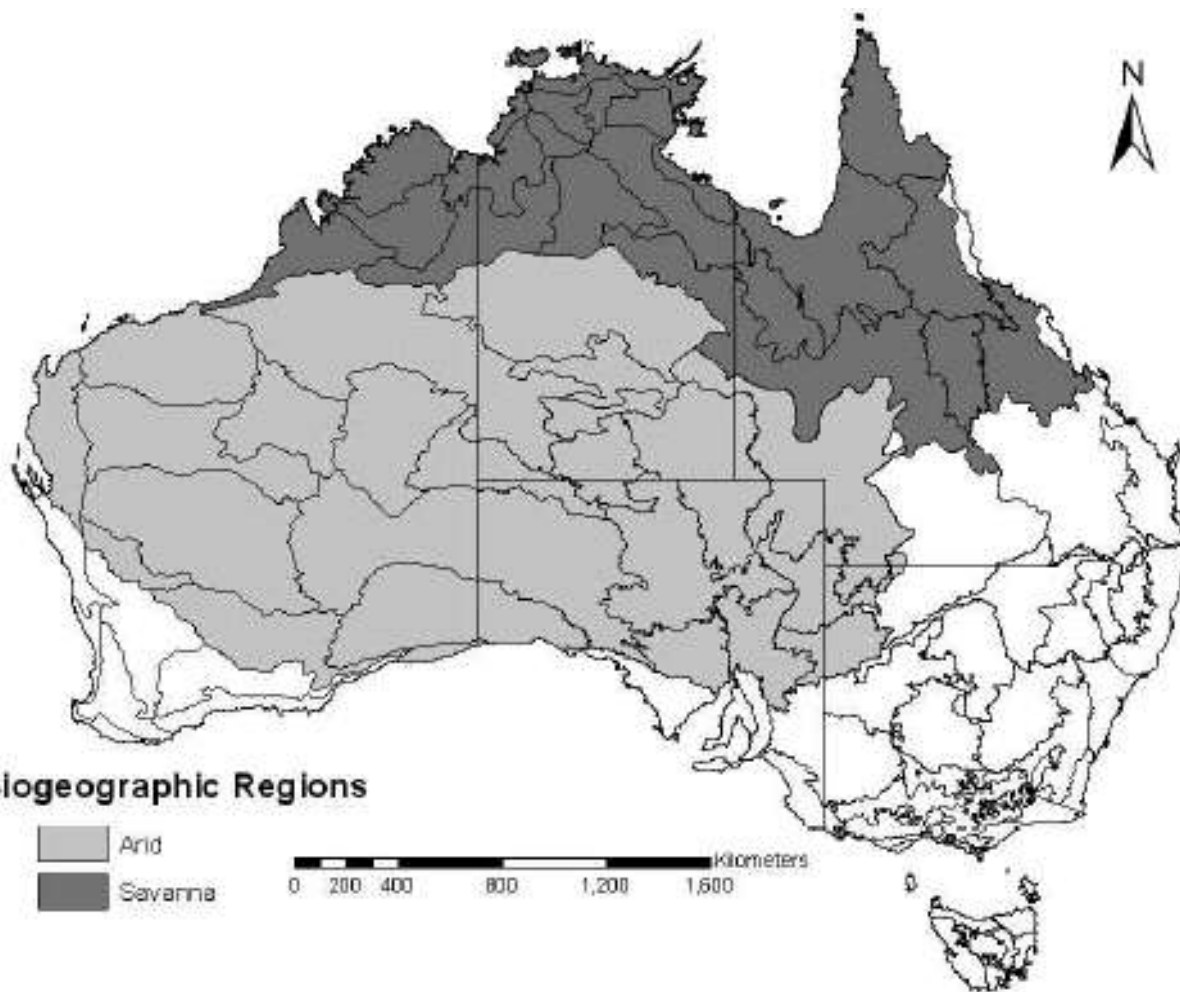
My thesis engaged with the political and practical context for creating sustainable futures in north Australia through recognition of the current and potential value of Indigenous land and sea management.

Methodology

The methodology began as an intent to be engaged and to do research that was of immediate value.



The North Australian Indigenous Land & Sea Management Alliance (NAILSMA) is an unincorporated bioregional forum for Indigenous land and sea managers across North Australia. It aims to support the practice of Indigenous land and sea management using strategic approaches to care for country with an emphasis management by Traditional Owners across the whole of the North.



Practical process - engagement as a writer

- NAILSMA Structure and governance
- Framework of a culture-based economy
- Writing about the value of Indigenous land and sea management to sustainable economies and the national interest generally
- Focused research in areas including biosecurity, climate change and carbon markets, markets in environmental services, and changes to water management and the NWI.

Theoretical framework and research methodology

- A collaborative, policy oriented research framework, with an emergent methodology.
- Drawing on the idea of phronesis and in particular the work of Flyvberg.
- Incorporating the ideas of policy orientation and the framework of action research.

Phronetic research

Phronetic research is drawn from Aristotelian theory of knowledge, which sets out three types of knowledge (Episteme Techne and Phronesis).

Phronesis involves practical, values-oriented rationality, informed by general and context specific knowledge, which enables deliberation towards good decision making.

The practice of phronetic research is focused towards providing input for public deliberation and decision making.

This is particularly relevant to sustainability which is inherently values oriented.

the goal of phronetic research is to produce input into the ongoing social dialogue and praxis in a society, rather than to generate ultimate, unequivocally verified knowledge (Flyvbjerg 2001 :139).

Policy Orientation

My work was policy-oriented in two specific ways. Firstly, it has fed into the policy development process within NAILSMA as an organization. Secondly, it has been oriented to support the development of advocacy positions through which NAILSMA can seek to influence national policy, and the policy of other corporate and non-Government organisations with which it interacts.

Analogy to action research

A defining feature of action research is its orientation towards positive social change, and its recognition that this type of research is best achieved in collaboration between researchers and stakeholders

The researcher becomes an active and engaged participant - in my case participant as 'research consultant'

Iterative process of dialogue, writing, reflection and more dialogue, and writing which is classic to action research design.

But how to make a thesis?

- 1) **A Framework for Reorienting Development** in North Australia, which we called the Culture-based economy
- 2) **A series of case studies that fit within the idea of a culture-based economy** (these were: carbon markets and Indigenous burning, Water reform and markets, Biosecurity and boarder security and Markets in Environmental services
- 3) **An academic discussion of the location of culture in development.**

A culture based economy

Is about imagining an economy that supports Indigenous people who wish to remain settled on their country and to fulfill their responsibilities for caring for it.

Underlying the culture-based economy framework has been recognition that all economies are essentially culture-based (as opposed to economically rational and therefore objective) and subsidise particular cultural values.

Dialogue around whose values are/should be being supported is important.

The concept of value goes beyond the purely economic.

A lens through which to consider some for the more specific ideas around ILSM and sustainability.

Overall it refers to a way of thinking that locates Indigenous people and lands and their sustainable development at the centre of 'northern development' and of central relevance to the broader interest of Australia as a nation.

Some Key Ideas

- Defining and protecting values that are important to Indigenous people, including responsibility to care for country
- Ensuring that outsider notions of customary do not impinge on Indigenous peoples contemporary rights to economic engagement
- Considers both Indigenous engagement in the mainstream economy alongside recognition of the need to maintain Indigenous custodianship over land.

- In terms of engaging in existing industries, the idea is that engagement occurs in a different way so that Indigenous people control the terms of their engagement and can influence how industries operate: eg, mining, tourism.
- Strategic positioning in new and emerging industries such as the carbon economy or markets for environmental services.

Case Studies

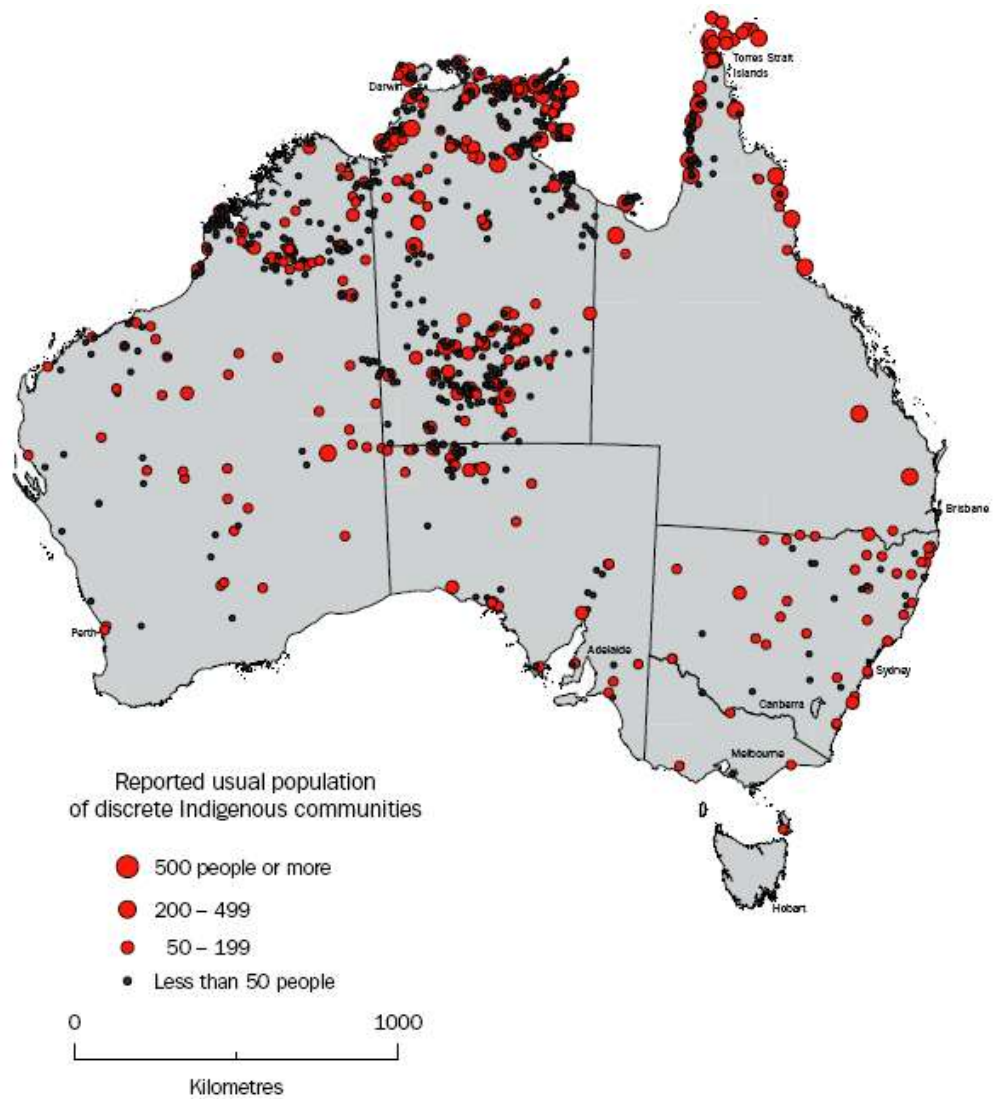
Each case study was:

- iteratively developed through writing with NAILSMA
- directly related to my own engagement with the culture-based economy framework;
- linked to a particular policy context or 'policy window'
- involved the framing/reframing of a particular issue from a perspective that was supportive of ILSM.

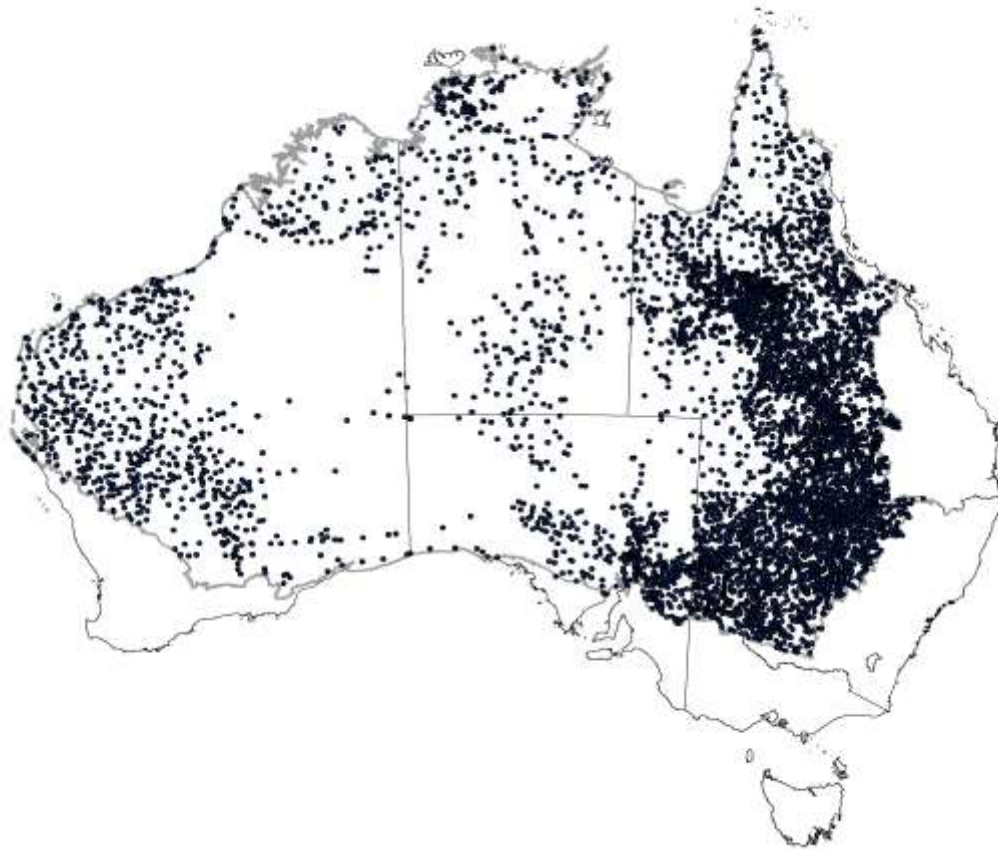
Biosecurity and Boarder security

- Top end and Cape York 70% coastal population is Indigenous
- Most of the northern coastline is Indigenous owned
- This is the area of Australia that is most at risk of breaches in boarder security and biosecurity

QuickTime™ and a
decompressor
are needed to see this picture.



Arid Zone Settlement In Australia



Highly political issue with implications for national security.

13 000 IFFV's sighted off north Australia coast in 2005. Customs aims for 400 interceptions

Issues include impacts on fisheries, national security (eg terrorism) and biosecurity

Biosecurity issues are interrelated with climate change and require particular vigilance

Predominant surveillance mechanisms rely in remote sensing technology, and response forces are concentrated in a few locations and unable to respond quickly over the vast area of the north coast.

Customs has been unable to respond in a timely way to Indigenous reports of IFFV's

Over a six month period in 2006, 29 IFFV's were "confronted and deterred" by Djelk Rangers. Coastal monitoring and surveillance is viewed as a long-term employment opportunity.

One of nine broad aims in the Dhimmuru sea country plans is "To have Dhimurru as real partners in monitoring, surveillance and enforcement concerning illegal fishing, illegal entry, breaches of quarantine and customs laws, and the protection of sacred sites"

Bardi Jawi rangers collaborate with fisheries WA and Customs in patrols north of Broome

Ngukurr Rangers are arguing for their right to stop illegal fishers and those who are overfishing

A lack of enforcement powers and minimal wages paid predominantly through the CDEP scheme have all limited the capacity of Indigenous sea rangers to adequately perform the surveillance roles. However there is growing interest in and increasing examples of collaboration and partnership toward changing this situation.

In the 2006-2007 Federal budget, \$6.9 million was allocated over four years to enhance engagement with north Australian Indigenous communities to report sightings and undertake quarantine testing

Rudd government has committed to more support, including real wages for rangers groups.

Overall, there is an ironic disjunction between the value to national security provided by Indigenous sea rangers, and their limited recognition and inequitable payment through CDEP.

Recognition also need to include support for the wide range of activities beyond boarder security

Indigenous coastal management has a high value to biosecurity but is much more than that as well.

Biosecurity is an important lever for recognition

SOME CASE STUDY CONCLUSIONS

-ILSM is important to sustainable livelihoods in north Australia, and requires an understanding of economic development that recognises that opportunities for economic development exists within particular social-cultural-ecological milieu

-Appropriate cultural and corporate governance needs to underlie enterprise development.

A need to locate Indigenous interests strategically, including through the development of policy positions, enabling regional structures, and branding or marketing strategies, which are important considerations toward increased realisation of opportunities discussed in these case studies.

The Culture based economy, and culture in development theory.

Academic discourse on the role of culture in development is complex. The term culture-based economy, however, was not drawn from academic discourse and its development has been more closely aligned to political advocacy.

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The most important outcome of this exploration was that

- its not about adding 'culture' to development

- its a lot about power and agency over who defines development

- requires dialogue, including cross cultural dialogue and recognition

CONCLUSION

The implication of recognising the value of Indigenous land ownership and management to sustainability is a different way to frame the relationship between Indigenous communities in north Australia and the nation. That is, it implies transition from a dynamic where Indigenous settlement on country is too easily seen as an unsustainable drain on resources to one where investment in sustainable settlement of Indigenous people on country, where this is an ongoing aspiration, is recognised as important to the national interest. This different policy framing will provide a different set of policy options, and opportunities for economic engagement that are likely to be of value to the whole country.