

8TH INTERNATIONAL WILDLAND FIRE CONFERENCE

GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES:

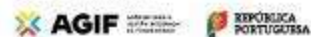
Towards an International
Framework

Porto - Portugal | **May 16-19th**, 2023

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INTERNATIONAL LIAISON COMMITTEE FOR THE IWFC



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The elephant (not) in the room: Absentee landholders, bushfire preparedness and community resilience in a changing landscape

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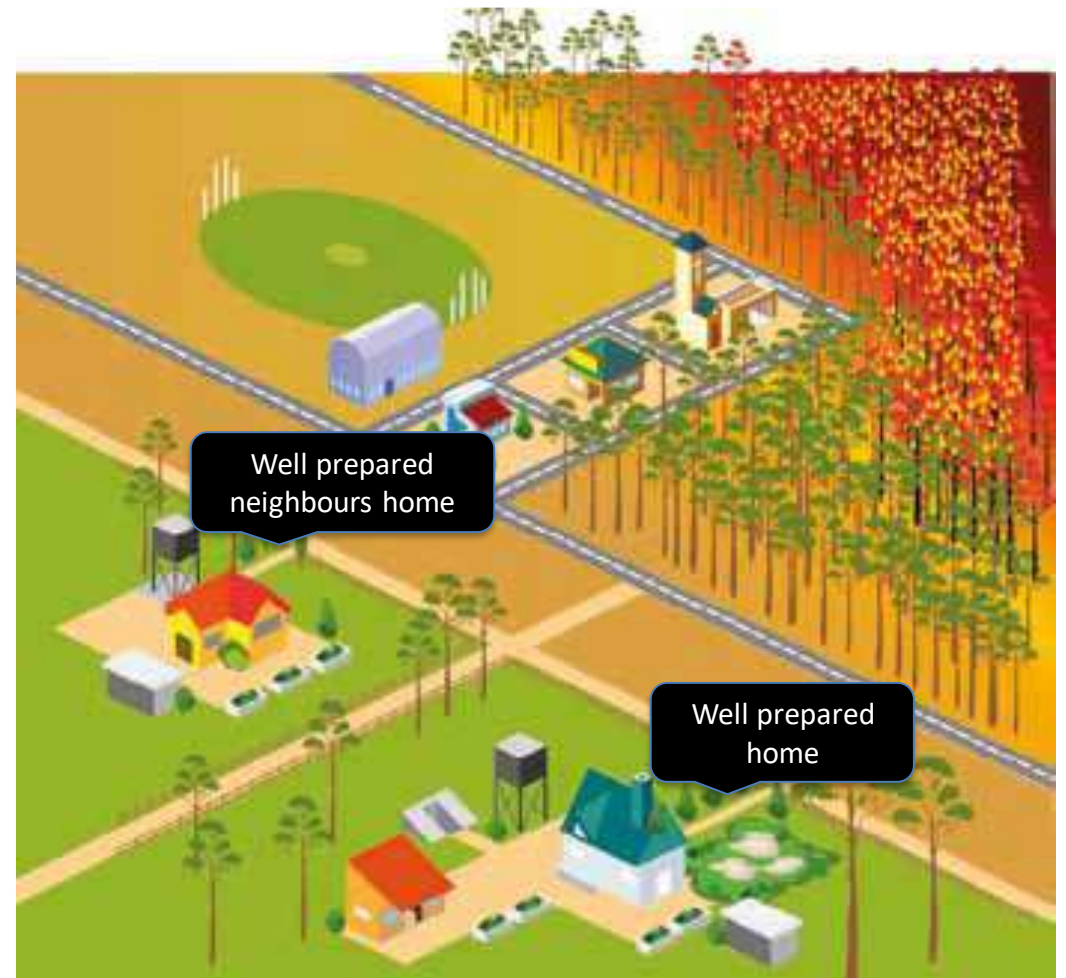
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The problem

How can we understand and build community resilience to wildfire in changing landscapes?

- Who/what is 'community'?
- What could this mean for fire agencies supporting bushfire preparedness and response?



Source: *Halls Gap Community Bushfire Information Guide*

Locating 'Community' in Community Resilience – Bushfire Research and Policy

'Community' is not singular (Mulligan 2015)

Excessive focus on **communities of place**
(Harrington 2008)

Absentee landholders are the great 'unknown'

Identifying **social values** of 'absent' community
members



The Victorian Government identified **Community Resilience characteristics** in its *Community Resilience Framework for Emergency Management*

Methodology & Methods



Community based
case study



Co-designed with
local council



Semi-structured
interviews with 30
absentee
landholders*



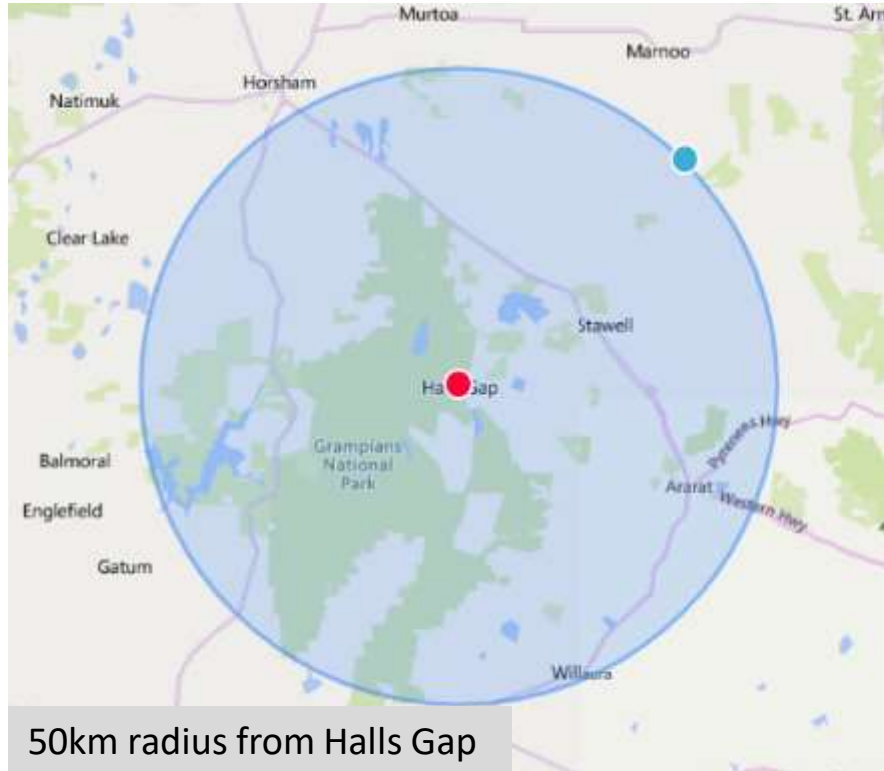
Facilitated workshop
with 8 absentee and
resident landholders



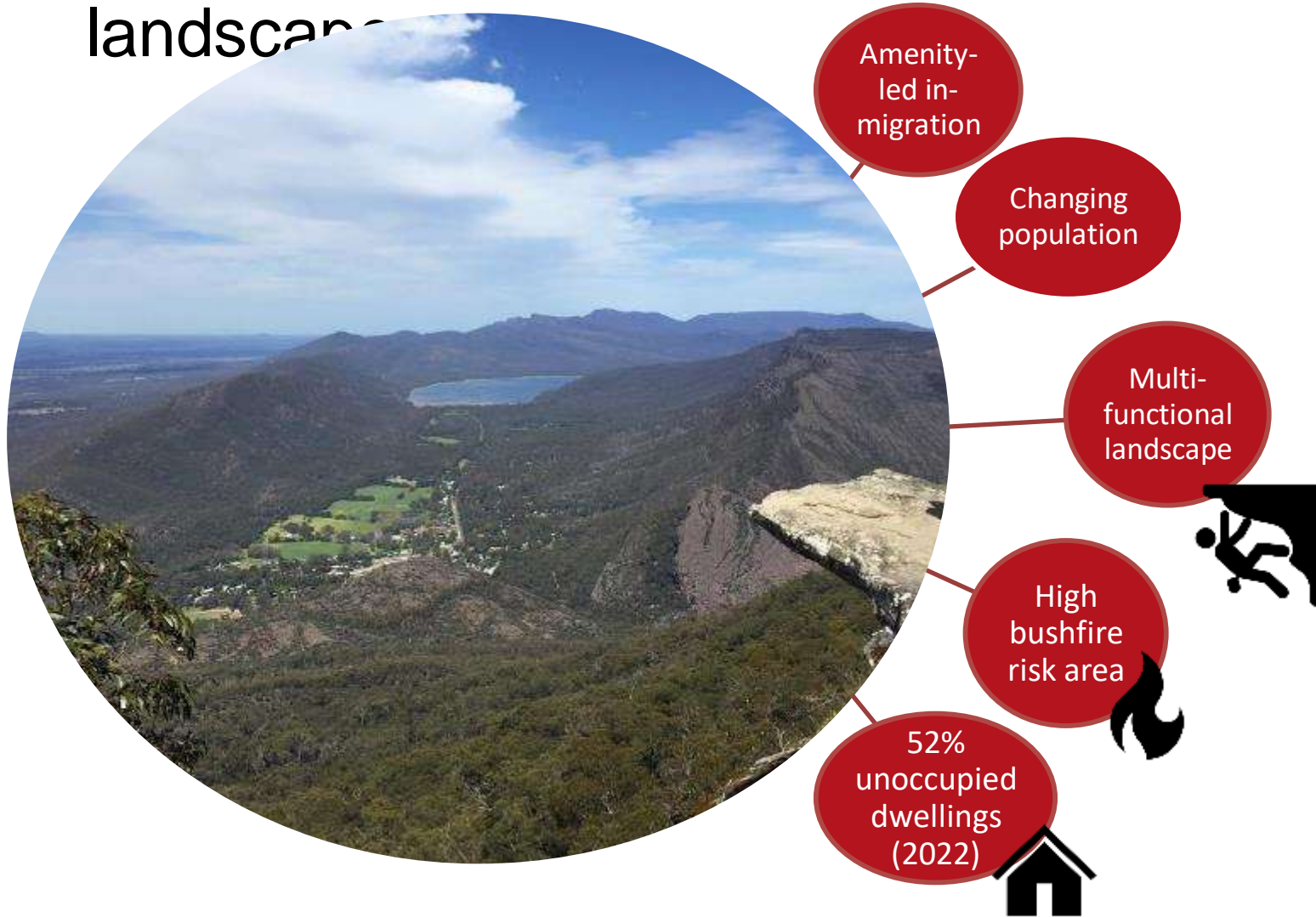
Theoretical thematic
analysis

* Landholders who's primary place of residence is >50km radius of town

The study area: Halls Gap, Gariwerd/Grampians



Halls Gap, – a dynamic socio-ecological landscape



Population change in a post Covid-landscape: Most interview participants were new property owners



Figure 3. How many years participants have owned their property in Halls Gap. The numerical value is the number of participants (source: Miller 2021).

Dispelling the assumption of 'disengaged, hard-to-reach' absentee landholders

What is important to AL?

- community connections
- environmental values
- responsibility for place

Engagement **limited by opportunity and capacity** to be brought into conversations, rather than *interest*

Social networks important for learning about local environment, bushfire history and appropriate **preparedness actions**



Grampians Fire burns behind the Halls Gap Hotel on January 18, 2014. Source: CAS Hamish Blair

We need to find new ways to...

- **Think about ‘community’**
 - communities of place → communities of practice?
- **Engage with non-place-based groups**
- **Link networks of communication and learning**



Bringing the elephant into the conversation...

