

Ceding Control: River-Running-Rights

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In Australia, environmental policy is at a political crossroads and the impacts of climate change are being felt by every citizen through, for example, the increasingly intense flooding on the Eastern seaboard. In this edited book, we ask the following questions. How ethical is it to trample on the rights of a river? Considering ecosystem services, what are the consequences of disrespecting the rights of rivers for ecological conservation? And at what cost do they come to our construction of cities and towns? How have earlier societies hindered balancing out the anthropogenic impact on the Earth system? And lastly, how can First Nation cultural wisdom further ameliorate the levers of modern environmental policy?

A comparative critical discourse analysis will seek to understand usurping environment narratives that are underpinning water policy as a form of truth-telling. The case studies will examine and compare public information of the water allocation plan of the Australian Murray-Darling river system, the formation of the New Zealand Whanganui river property rights, and the renaturalization of the Isar river in Munich, Germany. The book also suggests changes to the Australian government's Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999)—to force and effect rivers' legal and civil rights. Thus, it will give the public sector leverage to depopulate a floodplain with land buy-back, to re-create cultural spaces and conservation zones, and to let rivers run their floodplains.

The book will include: a dialogue led by Australian Indigenous peoples and an exploration of nature-based solutions; an ecology perspective—because flood plains are habitats; creative writing—because art changes minds that change policy; and environmental history and economic geography critiques—because people might want to pay less for house insurance.