


# Changing Water Values in Urban Waterway Naturalisation: Findings from a Sydney Case Study

Jacqueline Soars and Fiona Miller



state of **AUSTRALIAN** CITIES

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# Introduction

- Our research explored how changing water values are reflected in processes of urban waterway construction and naturalisation.
- Shifting social and cultural values determine how we perceive and manage urban waterways.
- Recent approaches to urban water management have seen an integration of diverse social and cultural values in urban waterway naturalisation.
- Particular value systems continue to be underrepresented.

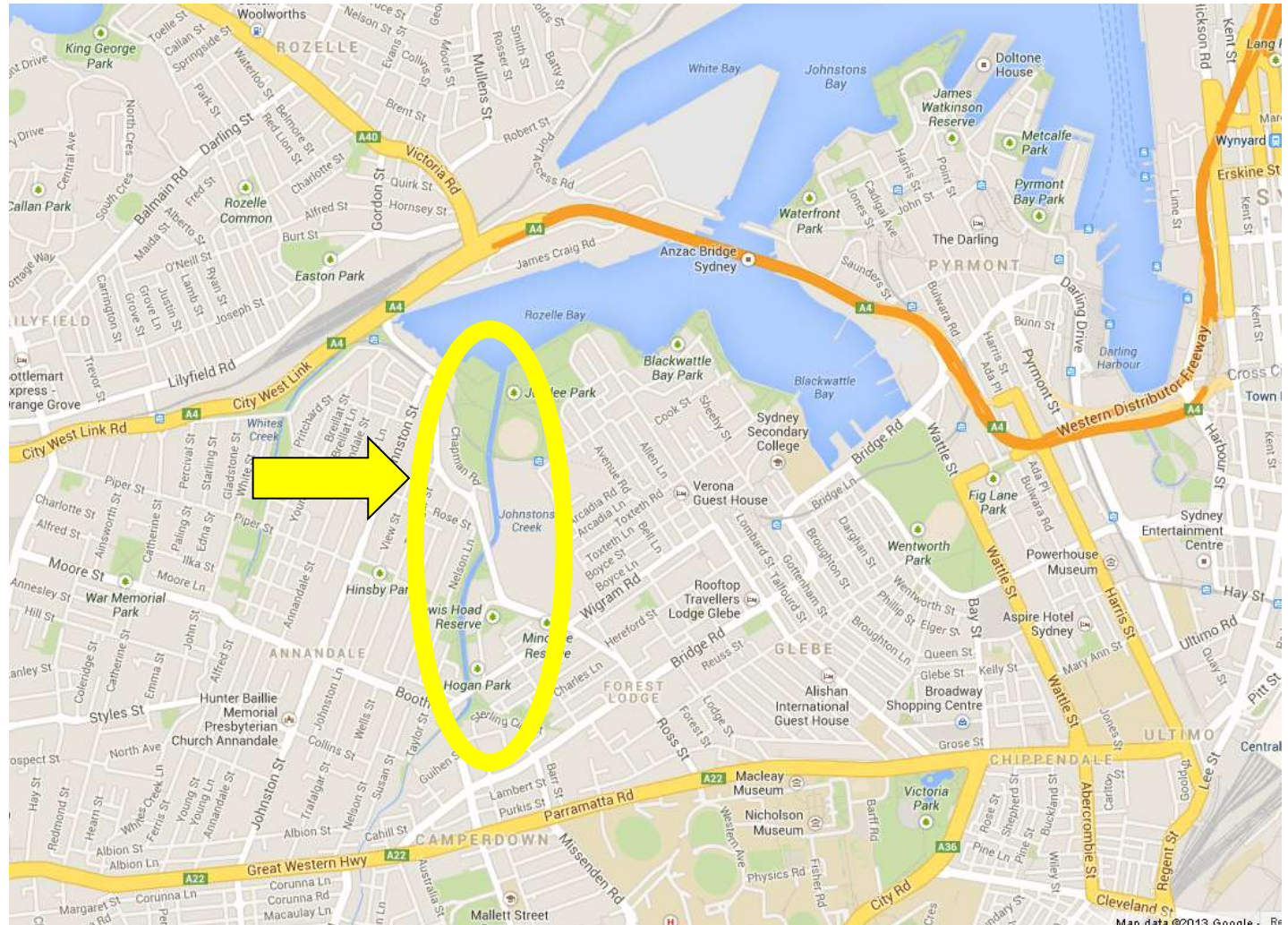


# Theoretical positioning of the study

- A **political ecology** framework was used to rethink the production of water.
- Dominant economic values shape human relationships with waterways and constrain naturalisation processes.
- Political processes produce environmental change.



# Case Study: Johnstons Creek Stormwater Channel, Annandale



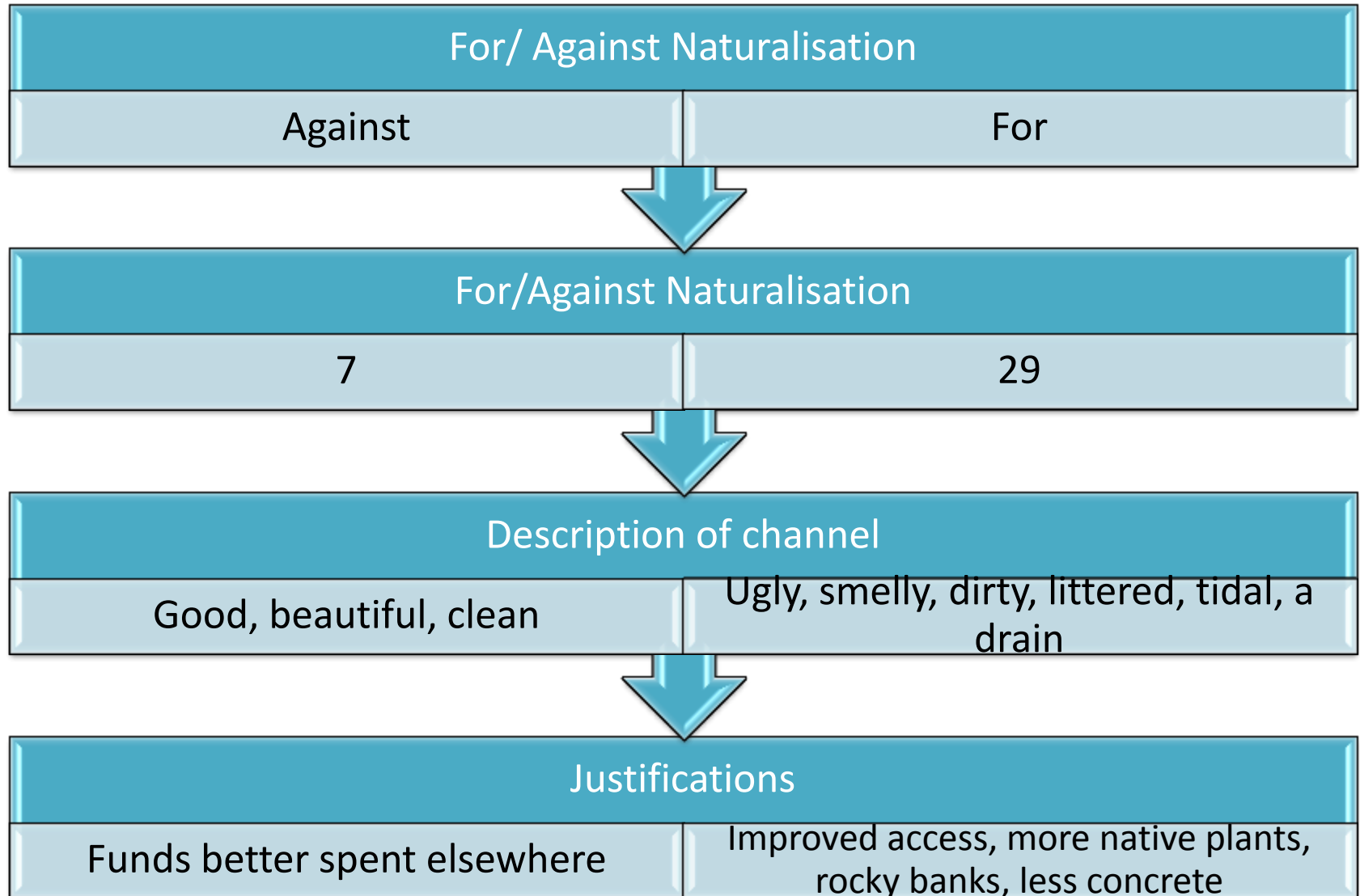
Johnstons Creek, Annandale, NSW ©Google maps 2013



# Methods and fieldwork

- Community member surveys
  - 6 questions, 36 individuals
- Comparative observations
  - General activities at different times
- Key informant interviews
  - 8 key informants
- Attendance at meetings and events
  - E.g. Council meetings, festivals

# Community values expressed





# Perspectives from Key Informants

- “the park areas are increasingly being used and I think that does mean people like the creek” (KI#3)
- “there is the public perception that turning waterways into wetland areas or other types of stormwater management can be a negative” (KI#1)

# Constraining factors influencing naturalisation

## Flooding

- Altered hydrological processes
- High amounts of runoff
- Overloading of infrastructure

## Lack of awareness

- Waterways have become intangible
- Unseen by the community
- Cannot value something that is not observed

## Heritage

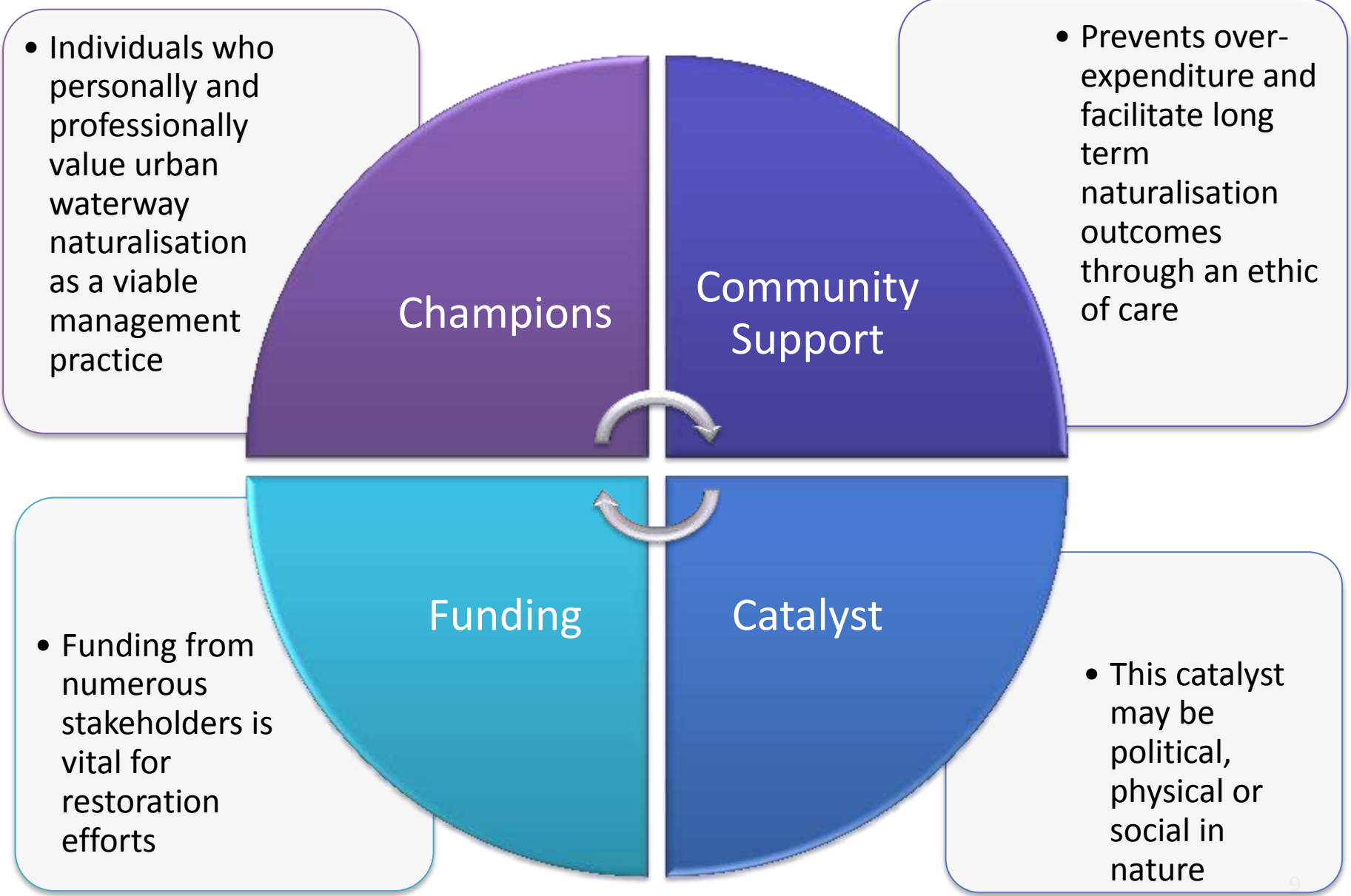
- Age and form of construction of the channel
- Reduces capability to undertake naturalisation

## Cost

- High costs of projects
- Justification required for such sums



# Enabling factors influencing naturalisation



# Conflicting values

## Human Centred

- Flood protection and prevention/safety
- Heritage of the channel
- Access to landscape and waterway
- Aesthetics and cleanliness
- Park infrastructure and open recreational space

## Eco Centred

- Ecology and biodiversity
- Water quality
- Habitat and habitat connectivity
- Natural hydrological processes
- Protection of an endangered ecological community

# Urban water processes



The potential naturalisation of Johnstons Creek signifies a move towards a 'water sensitive city' -to reinforce water sensitive behaviours



# Conclusion

- The values that allow naturalisation to occur have been constrained
- Human connections with urban nature, particularly urban waterways, are changing
- Contestation between constraining and enabling factors, as well as human-centred and eco-centred values limit what can be achieved
- The convergence of enabling factors is likely to result in greater inclusion of diverse values of water



Thank You

Jacqueline.soars@students.mq.edu.au  
Fiona.miller@mq.edu.au



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